United Nations

A/C.1/54/PV.5

General Assembly

Fifty-fourth session

First Committee

5th Meeting

Wednesday, 13 October 1999, 3 p.m.

New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. González . . . . (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I am delighted, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate you on your election to your responsible and important post. My delegation is confident that, with your rich diplomatic experience and wide knowledge of disarmament and international security, under your skilful guidance we will have a fruitful and constructive dialogue on the items on the Committee's agenda at this session. Let me also congratulate all the other members of the Bureau on their election. I should also like to thank last year's Chairman, Mr. André Mernier, and the other members of the Bureau last year for their skilful guidance of the Committee's work.

This session of the Committee is taking place in an atmosphere of heightened attention to disarmament issues by the international community. This year is very crucial for all of us. This session of the Committee is even more significant, if only because it is the last in this millennium. In order to usher in the next century in a worthy manner we must do our utmost to achieve the speedy implementation of the noble goals we have set ourselves.

It is true that on the threshold of the twenty-first century the international community has achieved significant successes in the maintenance of international security and disarmament. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Conventions on the prohibition of biological and chemical weapons, as well as other international instruments, are proof of this. But many vital questions are still being considered and have yet to be resolved, and the international community still faces the need to resolve many global problems and challenges that seriously threaten international peace and security, so we must avoid feeling self-satisfied and complacent. We must show firm political will, make more active efforts to strengthen what we have already achieved, and make further concrete and significant progress in disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is firmly convinced that the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are documents of fundamental importance in the field of disarmament and thus in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this connection, Uzbekistan fully shares and supports the principles and objectives reaffirmed at the 1995 NPT Review Conference, which are that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament should be implemented and that there should be international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. On the basis of our position of principle that the nuclear non-proliferation regime should be strengthened, Uzbekistan is in favour of the speedy entry into force of the CTBT and of a global commitment to the NPT.

Uzbekistan is one of the first 10 States to ratify the CTBT. This shows not only our deep understanding of the

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

importance of this Treaty, but also our desire to make a real contribution towards resolving the problems of nuclear non-proliferation, improving the ecological condition of the planet and strengthening global security and regional stability. For that reason our Republic, one of the States that asked the Secretary-General to convene the international Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, welcomed the Conference's recently completed work in Vienna.

Uzbekistan also welcomes the decision of the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/77 E, to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. Uzbekistan believes that the excessive accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a serious threat to international peace and security and significantly limits the prospects for steady and sustainable development in many parts of the world, particularly in conflict areas.

In recent years the issue of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones has become firmly rooted in the international disarmament agenda. The importance of such zones in strengthening global and regional peace and security has been reaffirmed in many international instruments, including the Final Document of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the documents of the three sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the year 2000 NPT Review Conference. The agenda for this session of the First Committee gives further confirmation. This question will undoubtedly be one of the basic issues facing the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000.

In this connection, Uzbekistan welcomes the progress that has been made in implementing and strengthening nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world — in Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. The position of Uzbekistan is based on its conviction that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely entered into between the States of the regions concerned, represents the integral tool of the mechanism of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and will substantially help to strengthen regional and international peace and security.

Uzbekistan consistently takes steps to maintain peace and strengthen security in Central Asia. These include the initiative to declare Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Significant progress has already been made in realizing this idea. Since last year's session of the First Committee a group of experts from the Central Asian States on the question of creating a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, with the active assistance of the United Nations Secretariat, in particular the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, has held a number of intensive consultative meetings with experts from international organizations. As a result, it has been possible to find common ground on all aspects of the treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The last of the series of meetings in this process was held a few days ago, from 5 to 8 October, in Sapporo, Japan. During the meeting the experts conducted very intensive and productive discussions on reaching agreement on many provisions of the treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The draft was elaborated following earlier meetings of experts. May I express sincere gratitude to the Government of Japan for the hospitality and assistance provided to us during that meeting.

In this respect, I should like especially to note resolution 53/77 A, adopted by consensus last December, in which the General Assembly expressed the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones could contribute to the achievement of general and complete disarmament, and that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States within the region, and taking into account the special characteristics of the region, could enhance the security of the States involved and strengthen global and regional security and peace.

The General Assembly also called upon all States to support the initiative aimed at the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and commended the concrete steps taken by the States of the region towards the realization of their initiative.

In this connection, I should like to thank the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, and through him the whole United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs. In particular, I should like to express gratitude to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for the assistance it gave us in elaborating the treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. I also express the firm support of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the work of the United Nations

Regional Centre. This is being carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/71 D, which stipulated in paragraph 3:

> "the Director of the Regional Centre ... should operate as before until a reliable means can be found to finance the operational needs of the Regional Centre".

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations which have welcomed and expressed support for our initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. I hope that States Members will support the draft resolution on the subject. That draft resolution is now being worked on, with the collective efforts of the Central Asian countries, and it will in due course be submitted by the five States of Central Asia for the attention of the members of the First Committee.

In the field of nuclear non-proliferation — apart from the CTBT and the NPT — Uzbekistan is also a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. The agreement between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the application of safeguards in connection with the NPT has been strengthened by the signing of the Additional Protocol in 1998. Strengthening the regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and preventing an increase in the number of countries possessing nuclear weapons are the basic priorities of our policy with regard to international peace and security. The Republic of Uzbekistan, as the initiator of the establishment of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, feels a responsibility for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and intends to participate actively in the process of making real progress in disarmament.

In conclusion, I assure you, Mr. Chairman, of the full support and close cooperation of my delegation in your efforts to achieve successful results in the work of this session of the First Committee.

Mr. Akinsanya (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation wishes at the outset to extend sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau, upon your election. We are confident that with your rich experience and diplomatic skills our deliberations will have a successful conclusion. You are assured of the support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation.

We also appreciate the statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, at the beginning of the session and thank him for it.

As in previous years, the Nigerian delegation attaches great importance to the work of this Committee. We believe that the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament, which should remain our central focus, is attainable, given the much needed political will of all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States. A world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains a legitimate expectation, which should serve the security interests of all States. It is, however, a matter of regret that the high hopes for peace dividends anticipated as a result of the end of the cold war have been dashed due to the persistent arms build-up, both nuclear and conventional, and the retention of huge arsenals by the nuclear-weapon States. My delegation believes that the Committee should strike the right chord at the beginning and set the right priorities if we are to meet the hopes and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the international community.

As we approach the new millennium, mankind is still living with fear and insecurity, internecine wars and intra-State conflicts, accentuated by an arms build-up and heightened by nuclear tests. At a time when the developing countries are faced with the serious challenges of globalization, poverty and development, the world is still witnessing the pursuit of military doctrines and scientific research that lead to new weapons systems and nuclear proliferation. This, to say the least, is unacceptable.

As a developing country, Nigeria is firmly committed to a non-proliferation regime. We continue to pursue with vigour our strong advocacy for general and complete disarmament. In the early stages of our independence Nigeria was one of the early opponents of the nuclear tests conducted in Africa, and in this regard we remain committed to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Nigeria's ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the signing of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Treaty of Pelindaba, further attests to our commitment to building a nuclear-weapon-free world. In this connection, the machinery has been set in motion for Nigeria's ratification of the Pelindaba Treaty. We have also ratified the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and would urge other States to do the same.

At the close of the twentieth century there is a need to take stock of disarmament activities that have taken place during the past decade. This decade marks the fifty-third anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly's first resolution calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It also marks the twenty-first anniversary of the adoption of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I). It was the decade in which the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly a report (A/51/950) entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", which included various disarmament measures.

That is not all. It was also in this decade that African leaders endorsed the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Treaty of Pelindaba. Three other nuclear-weapon-free zones — in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific and South-East Asia — became a reality, thereby not only enhancing regional peace and security but also prohibiting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. It was the decade that marked the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and witnessed the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It also marked the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines.

Those landmarks were possible only because of the shared concern of members of the international community to build a stable and peaceful world, free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Regrettably, despite these achievements, there remains a long list of grave concerns that demand our immediate attention. They include the failure in 1999 of the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum, for the third year in succession, to adopt a programme of work. This failure is due to the lack of consensus on nuclear disarmament and on outer space and to the lack of political will. It is our view in this regard that certain working procedures of the Conference on Disarmament are not suitable and need to be reviewed if we are to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Other concerns are: the stalled START process and the non-ratification of START II; the delayed entry into force of the CTBT; nuclear doctrines which are bound to complicate efforts towards nuclear disarmament; the non-accession to the NPT by some States; the doubtful viability of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which has been described as the cornerstone of strategic stability; the challenges to existing disarmament treaties; and, last, the development of long-range missiles and their testing by several countries, together with the development of missile defences.

However, disappointing though the current situation is, Nigeria has not lost hope in our collective ability to explore and find common ground on how to deal with the unfinished business of the outgoing millennium.

Permit me now to touch on an issue of paramount importance to my delegation. For Nigeria the priority remains to craft a new security and disarmament agenda for the twenty-first century. Such an agenda, in our view, must be comprehensive. The current agenda, which has lasted for a period of 21 years, was based on the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) of 1978. The contents of this vital document need to be revisited to enable us to develop new strategies. It is evident that we all agree in principle on the need for a new agenda. However, the problem lies with the divergent views expressed on the content of such an agenda. Ideally, a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) could set universal goals and principles for the agenda ahead. But, as we are all aware, the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its last session could not reach a consensus on the convening of an SSOD-IV. In the absence of such a consensus, my delegation would suggest that we should make the best use of the opportunity provided by the Millennium Summit, which is scheduled to be held in September next year, to set new goals. In this connection, my delegation is aware that disarmament will be among the principal themes to be addressed in the report that the Secretary-General will be preparing for that Summit. We therefore urge like-minded countries to come together to identify and discuss what is achievable during the Millennium Summit.

Conventional weapons provide the means by which countries defend themselves. But these easy-to-use tools in conflicts are also responsible for an estimated 90 per cent of all conflict-related deaths and injuries, 80 per cent of those victims being women and children. The control of conventional weapons therefore calls for concerted international action. It is the view of my delegation that calling for control of conventional weapons on the one hand and pursuing an aggressive arms sales policy on the other is a disservice to the cause of peace and a negation of the principle of honesty of intent by arms-exporting countries. Using arms sales to pursue political strategies cannot but promote instability, especially in developing countries. Such action also encourages the illicit arms trade.

In the context of the West African subregion, Nigeria participated in the UN-sponsored workshop on illicit trafficking in small arms that took place in Lomé, Togo, from 2 to 5 August 1999. Nigeria considered the recommendations of the workshop and intends to pursue monitoring measures in the following areas: first, entering into bilateral agreements with contiguous States to check the illicit trade in small arms; secondly, the licensing of small arms to include locally fabricated arms; thirdly, the maintenance of a register of manufacturers of locally produced arms; and, lastly, sensitizing the population to the need to report the illicit trafficking in small arms to the appropriate authorities.

Consistent with our peacekeeping and peace-building efforts in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region, my country is also interested in practical disarmament measures, such as the collection and destruction of small arms. This can reduce the potential for violence and enhance stability, thus facilitating the development process. In this connection, in July this year my President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, witnessed a ceremony in Liberia during which 1,500 usable weapons collected from the warring factions were destroyed. In addition, 30,000 unserviceable arms are to be converted to farm implements by a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aid project.

My delegation welcomes the decision to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects not later than the year 2001. We will work with other member States in the preparatory committee to be established during the current session.

We are also delighted to note the progress made on the Ottawa Anti-personnel Landmines Convention, which came into force in March 1999. We align ourselves with those pursuing the total elimination of landmines, because of their devastating effect on innocent lives, especially those of women and children. In this regard, we believe that Africa, and indeed the whole world, should be made safe for our children to walk freely in their playgrounds and for our peasants to be able to cultivate the land in order to feed their communities. Nigeria is therefore committed to acceding to the Convention as soon as possible.

In concluding, I wish to refer to the statement by my President to the General Assembly on 23 September 1999:

> "At the close of the twentieth century and the beginning of the third millennium, there is a need for stocktaking and for proper assessment of the implementation of previous resolutions emanating especially from the major world summits and conferences which took place in this decade. Such an effort would bring us closer to the realization of the purposes and objectives of our Organization." (*PV.10, pp. 11-12*)

It is in this context that Nigeria will continue its efforts within the United Nations to pursue the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First, Mr. Chairman, I wish to associate myself with those delegations which have already expressed satisfaction at your election to your post and wish you and all the other members of the Bureau fruitful work. We hope that all delegations will help to promote this.

Our waning century has been one of rapid evolution, having bequeathed us unprecedented achievements in scientific and technical progress and opened for mankind the door to other worlds. But we remember also other things. For example, we remember the millions of people who died in two world wars and in countless regional conflicts, which still rage today.

It is in this century that mankind has begun collectively to look for the answer to the principal question it has been asking itself: how to put an end to wars and give all the people of planet Earth a chance to live in peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, no universal answer to this question has yet been found. That is why Russia invites all countries to engage in dialogue in order to develop a concept of peace for the twenty-first century. The thrust of President Yeltsin's initiative is to create a new culture based on common values, where the highest priority of all peoples and States should be a world without wars and conflicts. The central role in the formation and realization of this concept would be played by the United Nations, the only universal mechanism for regulating international relations. Clearly, the problems of disarmament and international security play a key role here.

We see three main tasks in this sphere: strict compliance with disarmament agreements already concluded; a step-by-step reduction, with the ultimate goal of their elimination, of weapons of mass destruction, under strict and effective international control, together with a limitation of other types of weapons; and the prevention of an escalation of the arms race in new spheres.

For more than a quarter of a century the key element of strategic stability and the most important prerequisite for reducing strategic offensive weapons has been the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, the

ABM Treaty. Since it came into existence the ABM Treaty has demonstrated its vitality and its effectiveness. Under the Treaty mutual restraint by parties in the area of anti-ballistic missile defence systems has made it possible to stop the strategic offensive arms race, substantially reduce offensive strategic weapons, and now, in addition, to maintain a dialogue about continuing the process.

The Russian Federation has consistently favoured the reduction and limitation of nuclear arsenals, and in good faith has been complying with its obligations under the START I Treaty. We consider it important that START II and related instruments be ratified by the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and the procedures necessary for ratification be fulfilled by the United States Congress.

Provided strategic stability is maintained, the process of reducing and limiting strategic offensive weapons would have very promising prospects. Here I should like to remind members of Russia's readiness to engage in negotiations to reduce strategic offensive weapons on the basis of the basic elements defined at the meeting between the Presidents of Russia and the United States which took place in Helsinki in March 1997 and reaffirmed in Cologne in June 1999.

Russia is prepared to envisage within the framework of the future START III Treaty the reduction of the overall threshold to 1,500 warheads — that is, we would carry out even deeper cuts in nuclear arms than the ones envisaged in Helsinki.

All of these achievements and prospects are directly connected with compliance with the central provision of the ABM Treaty, the obligation not to deploy an ABM system on the territory of one's country and not to create the basis for this defence. Attempts to revise and violate the central provision would in practice mean subversion of the Treaty. In that case it would become impossible to implement START I and START II. In essence, the whole structure of the agreements, the strategic defensive arms reduction and limitation treaties, would be destroyed. The disarmament dialogue would virtually revert to the point of departure back in the period of the cold war. The whole set of international agreements on non-proliferation and arms control would be under threat. Moreover, new factors would arise which could destabilize the international situation at the global and regional levels.

We are aware of the danger of the spread and increased sophistication of missiles and missile technology. Russia supports the efforts being made by many countries to strengthen the missile non-proliferation regime. For our part, we propose to establish a global system to control the spread of missiles and missile technology that would include in particular a regime for the notification of ballistic missile launches. Unfortunately, plans to develop national ABM systems could have the opposite effect, stimulating the creation and proliferation of more sophisticated missiles.

Mindful of all these extremely negative consequences for all countries — and I stress "for all countries" — Russia calls upon the General Assembly to speak out in favour of maintaining and strengthening the ABM Treaty. Our delegation, together with the delegations of Belarus and China, has circulated a clear, non-confrontational draft resolution based on the language of the ABM Treaty itself and on joint statements made by the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States on this subject. We count on the broadest possible support for it, and invite other delegations to join us as co-sponsors of the draft.

In general, we consider that maintaining the integrity of the disarmament treaties is a key task. Russia is against attempts, under any pretext, to revise or dilute the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or cast doubt on the decision regarding its indefinite and unconditional extension. We believe that the NPT Treaty review process, as we prepare for the conference to be held in the year 2000, should be directed towards strengthening the Treaty and should promote implementation of the decisions taken by the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

We consider it important to take joint steps for the speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are in favour of the accession to the CTBT of India and Pakistan, as non-nuclear States, as well as of other countries which have not yet acceded but whose participation is necessary for its entry into force.

Russia welcomes the process of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world. We respect the status of the present nuclear-weapon-free zones. Under bilateral agreements with Mongolia, Russia has recognized Mongolia's non-nuclear status. We are prepared to consider, together with other countries, providing appropriate security assurances to Mongolia.

We support initiatives to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions as we do the proposal for a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe. We think that when establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones we should be guided by internationally agreed principles and practice and existing treaty commitments in the area of security. The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is the best way for States to receive legally binding security assurances. We are also prepared to consider the question of developing effective international arrangements on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and of starting work on this at the Conference on Disarmament.

It is quite obvious that today the main threat to peace stems from aggressive nationalism, separatism, terrorism and extremism, which recognize no borders and sow death and destruction. There is very good reason, therefore, why the central matter on the agenda of various forums is now the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Russia recognizes the importance and relevance of this problem, which we know from our own experience. The United Nations must play a leading role in preventing and limiting the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons. It is desirable to elaborate a global approach, to harmonize the efforts of States to resolve the tasks of establishing a mechanism of international cooperation in this area.

As a first step we need to concentrate on halting illicit arms transfers. Such transfers are the basic source of small arms and light weapons for bandit groups, criminal elements and extremists. It is precisely these illegal transfers that are used to violate arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council. Russia supports the proposal to hold in 2001 a conference on the illicit arms trade.

While attaching special importance to coordinating preventive measures in order to prevent an arms race in new spheres, Russia supports proposals to reconstitute the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament in order to elaborate a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The preventive approach requires an analysis of the consequences of the rapid development and wide application of the latest information and telecommunication technologies in order to prevent their use for purposes inconsistent with the objectives of the maintenance of international security.

On Russia's initiative, we discussed in the First Committee at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly the problems of international information security. We are grateful to all States that responded to the appeal in resolution 53/70 and communicated to the Secretary-General their views on a general evaluation of the problem of information security, a definition of the basic concepts in this area, and the advisability of developing international principles which would enhance the security of global information systems. We are also grateful to the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat — and I am happy to welcome here Mr. Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General — and to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), which organized and held in Geneva in August 1999 a representative meeting of experts on international information security. Pursuant to the results of work done during this year, Russia intends to submit to the First Committee at this session a draft resolution aimed at further examination, within the United Nations context, of the issue of information security. We count on further support from all delegations in our joint work on this topical subject.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): May I begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the current session of the General Assembly. I am confident that with your rich experience and outstanding diplomatic skills you will steer this session to success. The Chinese delegation assures you and the other members of the Bureau of its full cooperation in a bid to contribute to the success of the session.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Ambassador Mernier for the excellent job he did as Chairman of the First Committee at the last session.

Since the last session the international situation has undergone profound and complex change. The cold-war mentality is still present, coupled with new developments in hegemonism and power politics, thus making the world even less stable.

In Europe the only military bloc left over from the cold war, under its new strategic concept, bypassed the United Nations Security Council and bombed, with the world's most powerful and sophisticated military machinery, a weak sovereign State, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, turning the Balkan region, which has experienced so much misery in this century, into a testing ground for its new strategy.

In Asia certain individual countries are pressing rapidly ahead in their joint theatre missile defence development programme in a bid to further strengthen their military alliance in the region, which should otherwise have died out with the end of the cold war. There has also been a tendency to become inclined to actively intervene in surrounding areas.

In North America the vigorous and accelerated pursuit of the so-called missile defence programme, to the detriment of strategic stability, has presented grave challenges to the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty). The negative developments that I have mentioned have in our view worsened the international security environment, created urgent desires on the part of other countries to obtain high-efficiency weapons as soon as possible, and have thus constituted an obstacle to the sound development of the international arms control and disarmament process.

International arms control and disarmament are now at a crossroads. What course should be taken? That is a pressing issue of concern common to the international community. We are of the view that the relaxation of the international situation and the arms control process are mutually reinforcing and supportive. The old security concept based on military alliances and an arms build-up will not help to resolve any problem. We are not in favour of any attempts to seek, using certain excuses, military strength that goes beyond legitimate self-defence needs. Likewise, we are also against any attempt unilaterally to seek absolute security advantages for one country or bloc by limiting and weakening other countries under the pretext of arms reduction and non-proliferation. We believe that to promote the disarmament process, to prevent the arms race and safeguard international security, it is imperative that a new security concept, in line with the changed international situation, be established.

President Jiang Zemin of the People's Republic of China pointed out in his statement at a plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on 26 March this year that the core of such a new security concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The five principles of peaceful coexistence make up the political foundation underpinning world peace; mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity constitute the economic guarantee for world peace; dialogue, consultations and negotiations between the parties concerned on an equal footing represent the correct approach to resolving disputes and safeguarding peace. In this context, we call on the international community to take this new security concept as a guideline. Only by so doing can it ensure that the arms control and disarmament process will move in the correct direction, thus safeguarding world peace and security.

I now wish to outline China's views on some major issues which are under review by the First Committee. At the current session the Committee will consider a series of draft resolutions pertaining to nuclear disarmament. The elimination of nuclear weapons represents the common aspiration of people all over the world. However, the nuclear disarmament process between the United States and Russia, after making certain, temporary progress, is now bogged down in a stalemate, which is coupled with new nuclear tests after the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Such developments clearly indicate that to promote nuclear disarmament and prevent nuclear proliferation remains a formidable task for the international community, not only now, but also for a fairly long time to come.

Here I wish to reiterate our views on the next step for nuclear disarmament, as pointed out by President Jiang Zemin in his statement, which is that countries with the largest nuclear arsenals in the world should continue to take the lead to drastically cut down their respective nuclear arsenals and refrain from improving the quality of nuclear weapons and developing such weapons; negotiate and conclude a fissile material cut-off treaty to cap the quantity of nuclear weapons; ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while comprehensively promoting the attainment of all the objectives of the NPT; negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument on unconditional non-first-use of nuclear weapons, non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and a comprehensive prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons; and ultimately to move to negotiate and conclude a treaty on the comprehensive prohibition of nuclear weapons, so as to genuinely achieve the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

To achieve that goal, it is essential that all countries should act on the principles of maintaining global strategic stability and safeguarding the security interests of all countries. Only by so doing can they ensure that sustained progress will be registered in the nuclear disarmament process. The vigorous development and proliferation of advanced missile defence systems obviously will not contribute to international nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation endeavour. On the contrary, it will only poison the atmosphere and the conditions required for movement in the nuclear disarmament process and threaten an arms race at an even more advanced level.

The comprehensive prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons should, in our view, be the ultimate goal of the international community, because if nuclear weapons are eliminated there will be no proliferation of them, nor will there be a proliferation of long-range missiles or a missile threat. In the final analysis, therefore, to reduce the threat to peace it is desirable to devote more efforts to disarmament per se, instead of otherwise.

China was subjected to nuclear threat and blackmail on several occasions in the 1950s and 1960s, and was thus compelled to develop a limited number of nuclear weapons. It is against this backdrop that we have throughout adopted a responsible attitude towards the question of nuclear weapons and have made our due contribution to promoting nuclear disarmament. China has always pursued the policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons at any time or under any conditions; no participation in the nuclear arms race; and no deployment of nuclear weapons outside its territory. China's nuclear weapons are purely for self-defence purposes; they do not constitute any threat to anyone. Moreover, China's extremely limited number of nuclear weapons are placed under strict control, and there is no risk of an accidental launch.

It should be pointed out that the overall international environment of peace, security, stability and trust is a must when talking about measures such as transparency in nuclear arsenals and de-alerting nuclear weapons. Therefore, such measures should, naturally, be linked with the nuclear disarmament negotiation process. At present there is a very wide gap between the nuclear-weapon States in terms of their nuclear strength. A certain country is pursuing its nuclear deterrence policy based on the first use of nuclear weapons, while vigorously developing its missile defence systems, to the detriment of the strategic balance. It also wantonly resorts to, or threatens to use, force in international relations. Under such circumstances, it is both premature and unfair to indiscriminately call for the adoption of open and transparent measures on the nuclear front. We should be alert and ensure that nuclear disarmament is not led astray. The recently published report of the Tokyo Forum, for instance, is quite lopsided and has biased views. Many of its arguments are neither just nor fair and deviate from the purposes of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, China cannot but register its opposition.

China has all along attached importance to the question of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and is particularly concerned over the latest developments on this front. A certain country has, on the one hand, tried hard to block the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space at the Conference on Disarmament, while on the other hand it has pressed rapidly ahead in pursuit of its outer space and missile defence programmes, in an attempt to seek military advantage on the ground through dominating and controlling outer space. The developments in the vigorous pursuit of missile defence systems since the beginning of this year are most disturbing. The international community is confronted with the danger of the weaponization of outer space and the repudiation of the ABM Treaty. In such circumstances, there is a pressing need for the international community to find ways to strengthen its efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space.

At its last session, in adopting resolution 53/76, the General Assembly urged the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and reiterated the need for the Conference on Disarmament to play a major role in concluding a multilateral legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. However, to our regret, at its 1999 session the Conference on Disarmament failed to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee, due to the obstruction of a certain individual country. We maintain that the relevant General Assembly resolution to be adopted this year should continue to urge the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee at an early date next year and immediately begin its substantive work so as to reverse the negative developments in the field of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and missile defence. We also maintain that at its current session it should take measures to preserve the integrity and validity of the ABM Treaty.

The Chinese delegation supports efforts to comprehensively strengthen the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention and to establish a fair, reasonable, appropriate and feasible verification mechanism. To this end, it is imperative that the balance between the rights and obligations of the States parties be taken fully into account so as to prevent the abusive use of verification and to protect the legitimate security and economic interests of all States parties. In the meantime, it is also very important to enhance international cooperation and exchange in the field of biology. It remains our objective to conclude negotiations on the protocol before the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention. The key to progress in negotiations lies in the full accommodation of each other's legitimate concerns by all parties. To place undue emphasis on speed and table the so-called "clean text" prematurely while there are still major disputes between the parties can only be counter-productive. China wishes to continue its earnest negotiations on the basis of the existing rolling text in a bid to help to bring about a good protocol, acceptable to all.

It is two years since the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) entered into force, but its universality is yet to be further promoted. A few countries, especially one with a major chemical industry, have failed to submit their initial declarations on civilian chemical industries in accordance with the Convention. A certain country has made various reservations through domestic legislation when implementing the Convention. The chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in China are still threatening the life and property of the Chinese people as well as the ecological environment. This issue, left over from history, should be resolved at the earliest possible date. In this context, we call on the countries concerned to face those problems squarely and earnestly work to implement the Convention in full.

The issue of small arms has become one of increasing concern to the international community. China also attaches importance to it. The problem of small arms involves factors across a wide spectrum, from disarmament and security to social and economic development, thus calling for a comprehensive and integrated approach through concerted efforts by the international community and effective measures at international, regional and subregional levels in accordance with the specific situations of different countries and regions. Such measures could include, for instance, the prohibition of the illegal manufacture and transfer of small arms, the strengthening of control over legal manufacturing and the transfer and collection of weapons in post-conflict regions. Last July the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms concluded its report with many useful suggestions. China, as a member of the Group, actively participated in the discussion. We believe that the report will provide useful ideas for the international community to handle the problem of small arms in the future.

China has consistently supported imposing proper and rational restrictions on the use of anti-personnel landmines. To this end, China has ratified the amended landmine protocol (Protocol II) and the new additional protocol on blinding laser weapons to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The two instruments of ratification were deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations last November. In addition, China is about to submit to the Secretary-General its annual report on the implementation of the landmine Protocol. It will also actively participate in the first annual conference of the States parties, to be held by the end of this year.

China is of the view that, in addition to improving international law and imposing strict restrictions on the use and transfer of landmines, the most pressing task before us now is to assist mine-affected countries to clear abandoned mines that are threatening the lives of civilians. With this in view, China has contributed funds earmarked for demining activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. In addition, the first demining training workshop co-sponsored by the United Nations and China has just been held in Nanjing, China, with trainees from Cambodia, Namibia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other mine-affected countries. These trainees will, upon completion of their training, be able to contribute to cleaning up their land and to the livelihood of their fellow countrymen.

China has all along attached importance to the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, and is appreciative of the great efforts made by the Department for Disarmament Affairs in this regard, especially the efforts made by the Under-Secretary-General. Since 1988 China has annually contributed to relevant disarmament institutions of the United Nations as a means of rendering its support. This year China will once again contribute $10,000 to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which we hope will be channelled to fund the United Nations disarmament fellowship programme.

The international disarmament endeavour is at a crucial juncture as we move into the next century. In international relations we must be firm and resolute in opposing and abandoning the practices of hegemonism, power politics, armed invasion or interference and the pursuit of absolute military security. Only by so doing can we, in the final analysis, maintain international peace and stability and secure sustained progress in disarmament. And only by so doing can mankind be immune from the threat of an arms race and war and see ushered in a new century in which all countries and the whole of mankind will be able to enjoy long-lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is particularly pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the Committee's work. You represent Chile, a great, friendly country, with which through political will we are building a mature relationship of integration based on respect and mutual trust. We have no doubt that with your skill, background and extensive experience you will guide our work with wisdom and effectiveness. I also convey my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, the representatives of Germany, Lithuania, the Sudan and the Philippines, and also to Ambassador Mernier of Belgium for the way in which he guided our work during the last session of the General Assembly.

I should like first to emphasize how pleased we are with the dynamism that Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala has brought to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and with his invaluable cooperation with the Security Council. We agree with his affirmation of the vital role that the United Nations must play in the defence of existing norms of peace and security and in shaping the necessary political will to establish new agreements.

It is both strange and contradictory that just when we felt that the non-proliferation regime was on track serious threats to it are emerging. This is inadmissible. Unfortunately, we remain concerned at the persistence of situations involving a risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, jeopardizing the internal security of States and regional and global stability. On the eve of the new millennium, renouncing weapons of mass destruction constitutes the highest priority.

Argentina, as one of the countries that, having mastered the entire nuclear fuel cycle, decided to set limits on itself, will continue tirelessly to appeal to all States to renounce the nuclear option and give unequivocal guarantees that nuclear capacity will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. In addition, Argentina will continue to work for strict compliance in good faith with the commitments entered into in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In this respect, we are following with special interest the debate now going on in political and academic circles, and among the public, in the United States concerning ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, since that debate reflects the sensibilities, political difficulties and balances involved in disarmament issues. We are convinced that timely ratification by the United States will give a decisive impetus to the Treaty's entry into force. Achieving its universality is a legitimate aspiration of the international community, one which we actively promote. Argentina will also continue to promote the prompt initiation of negotiations on a convention for the prohibition and destruction of fissile material, in order to implement the decisions taken at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the parties to the NPT.

The excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, in particular small arms, is both a consequence of tension or conflict and a cause of their aggravation or prolongation. On every occasion when it has been a member of the Security Council, Argentina has sought to support the Council's concrete contributions, in accordance with the high responsibility that being a member entails. This year important open debates have been held on disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as on small arms. On those occasions Argentina has endeavoured to emphasize the negative impact of the accumulation of weapons on human security and on sustainable development. In this context, we support the holding of an international conference, no later than 2001, to deal with the issue of the illicit arms trade in all its aspects.

The problem of anti-personnel landmines is far from being resolved, but at least the international community has succeeded in giving a global response through the Ottawa Convention. That is why Argentina decided to join those countries that are working hard to make the attainment of the Convention's objective possible, together with cooperating in mine clearance and assistance to victims. These are fundamental and complementary aspects of alleviating suffering and opening the way to development. In this context, on 14 September Argentina ratified the Ottawa Convention, fulfilling a commitment made in the Declaration establishing the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries, and Bolivia and Chile, as a zone of peace: to move towards establishing the MERCOSUR countries, and Bolivia and Chile, as a zone free of anti-personnel landmines, and to seek to extend that status to the entire hemisphere.

The transition stage we are going through is resulting in a redefinition of the United Nations, regional structures and national States and in their adaptation to new international conditions and a new international system. We must all engage in dialogue and consultation in order to contribute positively to harmonizing views on the future global security system. We therefore consider it a privilege that under our chairmanship the Conference on Disarmament was able to agree on that body's expansion. We take this opportunity once again to congratulate

Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia and to thank them for their contribution to the work of the Conference.

As we have said on previous occasions, no dialogue or progress is possible without peace. It would seem that at last the world has understood that conflict and violence undermine the prospects for development. Let us not lose this opportunity. The international scene presents significant challenges, as the Committee's agenda clearly shows. The list of issues that my delegation has just raised is not exhaustive. In due course we will make more detailed comments.

We have no doubt that this will be a fruitful session of the First Committee. To that end, Mr. Chairman, please be assured of my delegation's complete cooperation.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to make two appeals on important matters. I think that in doing so I am stating not simply my view but the consensus view of all delegations.

First, it would be better if representatives did not carry on conversations at the back of the room. All delegations deserve our utmost respect and all make extremely important contributions. It is very difficult for the Chairman to be faced with the dilemma of whether to interrupt a speaker to ask for quiet. Representatives could very well conduct their conversations outside. It is a question of the minimum of respect for delegations. I should like to establish this principle from the very outset of our meetings.

Secondly, some representatives are interrupted when addressing the Committee, because others move right in front of them, without any consideration for those making the statements that are so appreciated by us all.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First may I tell you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, how pleased we are to see you presiding over the work of the First Committee at this important session of the General Assembly, the last of the millennium. I reiterate my delegation's readiness to cooperate fully with you. We are convinced that you will achieve the success to which we all aspire. I also wish to congratulate all the other members of the Bureau on their election. My delegation wants to express very special thanks to Ambassador Dhanapala for his presence here in our debate and for his constant support of the work of all the United Nations disarmament forums.

In order to have faith in the future, we must recall and reaffirm the important steps that are steadily being taken in the field of disarmament. For example, in 1999 the international community made some progress which it is fitting to highlight briefly. Particularly noteworthy was the success, even if only partial, achieved during the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in agreeing on various fundamental matters that will make it possible from the very outset of that conference to do advanced work, bearing in mind the many complex matters that will be dealt with. Unfortunately, the success was not complete, because agreement was not reached on recommendations concerning substantive matters.

We are delighted that the Conference on Disarmament resolved the matter of the expansion of its membership, with the acceptance, by consensus, of the admission of Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Tunisia and Ecuador. For Ecuador this means recognition of its active participation in all disarmament forums, particularly in the General Assembly, where it has maintained a consistent line of conduct expressed in the unswerving defence of principles. That stance will be maintained by my country in its contribution to the Conference on Disarmament, together with its constant readiness to cooperate in all efforts whose objective is the attainment of disarmament, understanding among peoples and respect among nations.

We are also pleased with the success achieved by the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session, where consensus was reached on the adoption of two significant texts. The first concerns the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. The second concerns the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. The Disarmament Commission, the specialized deliberative organ within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, has made a significant contribution by adopting a range of specific recommendations. These are aimed at future action to be implemented by the international community within the overall framework for the consolidation of peace through the application of concrete disarmament measures and the consolidation of the non-proliferation regime.

An important development is the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The success achieved at the First Meeting of the States Parties, held in Maputo, in establishing an inter-sessional programme of work, will facilitate the Convention's full implementation.

My country has assumed its obligations under that important Convention, beginning full implementation with the creation of Ecuador's mine clearance centre, just two weeks ago. Its aim is to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims, ensure better structuring of mine-clearance tasks, coordinate the various bodies involved in the matter and try to make the best possible use of international assistance.

My delegation cannot fail to make particular mention of the fact that a year ago this very month the peace agreement between Ecuador and Peru was signed. It resolved a century-old territorial conflict, opening the door to close friendship, cooperation and partnership in the shared struggle for the development of our peoples. This new reality, which is an example to the world, overcomes a past of distrust and consolidates a future of peace; it means the elimination of the threat of war and the implementation of a disarmament programme, and allows the full use of financial resources for human development.

As for the First Committee's agenda this year, we believe that innumerable, difficult issues remain pending. I wish to refer briefly to a few which my delegation believes will be the focus of attention in our debates and action.

Ecuador regards as indispensable the implementation and verification of obligations undertaken by States through international arms limitation, disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. There is therefore an urgent need to establish competent mechanisms enabling the detection and resolution of problems stemming from non-compliance.

The total, unrestricted implementation of such agreements is essential to the process of general and complete disarmament, for which humankind is working so hard. Non-compliance with agreements on arms limitations, disarmament and non-proliferation threatens international peace and stability. My country is convinced that it is not possible to make significant progress on disarmament unless the qualitative and quantitative arms race is effectively halted. In this respect, scientific and technological advances must exclusively serve peaceful objectives. Bearing in mind that over 75 per cent of military might is concentrated in the hands of the major Powers, we must ensure that conventional disarmament is complemented by measures and initiatives that are global in scale.

In the same context, Ecuador is particularly concerned about imbalances in the military arsenals of countries of one region which, far from promoting greater security for those with the biggest arsenals, in the end increase the insecurity and instability of the entire region.

The phenomenon of small arms and light weapons is a universal source of concern. We attach special significance to the 1999 report (A/54/258) of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. It is essential to establish mechanisms to impose restrictions relating to the production and marketing of those weapons on State-authorized arms traders and producers. The illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, as well as their stockpiling and criminal and indiscriminate use, is a great scourge afflicting our societies. It is therefore necessary to make a universal effort at control, through firm norms and greater regional and universal cooperation.

The victims of this phenomenon are almost 100 per cent civilians. Eight out of ten of those killed are women and children. These weapons are used basically in internal conflicts and in carrying out criminal acts, where their use is uncontrollable. The statistics on the trade in them are certainly alarming. In this context, Ecuador strongly supports the holding of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects in 2001. Here my delegation agrees with the representative of Mexico, who two days ago expressed support for the Preparatory Committee's mandate being

> "to define the objectives, scope and start date of the negotiations on the rolling text to be approved by the conference". (*A/C.1/54/PV.5*)

Ecuador pledges its active cooperation and participation in the work of that conference.

As is stated in the document adopted this year by the Disarmament Commission, the important contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to the strengthening of the international non-proliferation regime and to peace and security, regional and global, has been universally recognized. As is well known, 107 States have signed or are parties to the treaties establishing the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, which cover more than 50 per cent of the earth's land mass. Ecuador advocates the consolidation and improvement of these zones, established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba. We support recognition of the example given by the declaration of Mongolia as a nuclear-weapon-free State and the development and completion of the processes of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East and Central Asia, efforts that my country firmly supports. In this context, my delegation will continue to support and cooperate in the attainment of the objectives of the nuclear-weapon-free initiative with regard to the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas, because this is a real, solid way to strengthen the non-proliferation regime in a space that is increasingly genuinely free of nuclear weapons.

Any proposal that can promote nuclear disarmament should be welcomed. We therefore support the initiative on the need for a new agenda towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. We believe that there should be an uninterrupted process towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, together with a renunciation of the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and other actions that endanger international peace and security.

In this respect, my country believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) constitutes the essential non-proliferation and disarmament system. Therefore, universal, unconditional adherence to it is urgently needed. We encourage the few countries that have not yet adhered to it to do so without delay. Moreover, countries whose participation is essential should adhere to and ratify unconditionally and without delay the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), so that it may soon enter into force. The lack of the necessary ratifications causes enormous disappointment and delays the efforts being made by the international community to bring about a safer world. In the Conference on Disarmament my country will advocate the prompt initiation of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral, effective and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices, the cut-off treaty, taking into account the objectives of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. This new instrument would complete a broad universal, basic body of norms in the nuclear sphere.

My delegation deplores the fact that the Disarmament Commission at its substantive session this year was unable to achieve final consensus on the subject of convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV), which is so necessary. However, we commend the serious efforts made by the relevant working group, whose work we believe will in any event provide fundamental elements for the United Nations to do continued work on this effort, which will undoubtedly be of enormous benefit to the international community.

Ecuador supports the work that has been done, and can continue to be done, by the regional centres for peace and disarmament – in particular the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has its headquarters in Lima, Peru – in the implementation of programmes of education and dissemination of information aimed at promoting regional peace and security and confidence-building.

Lastly, my delegation reaffirms its full support for the principles of international humanitarian law and congratulates the Security Council on its initiative in holding last month a broad and important debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, a matter that we believe should receive greater concern and attention from the international community.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, may I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and through you Chile, on your well-deserved election to preside over the Committee's work. We are convinced that your recognized ability will enable you to lead our work to a successful conclusion. I assure you of the continued cooperation of my delegation. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau and express our appreciation to the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Mernier of Belgium.

Disarmament in all its forms, demilitarization and the reduction of military expenditures are of the utmost importance to my country. Our national experience has taught us that not investing in arms is the best policy for countries really committed to the well-being of their peoples. We believe that the promotion of peace and security, both at the international level and at the domestic level, requires a resolute policy of reducing military expenditures and strengthening civil authority. For 50 years Costa Rica has spent nothing on weapons and has devoted its public expenditures to education, preventive health and the infrastructure.

That is why disarmament, both nuclear and conventional, is one of the fundamental principles of our foreign policy. Our national experience has convinced us that organized international society must focus its efforts on the attainment of this noble objective. The reduction of military expenditures is particularly important for the developing States. Our resources are scarce and must not be mismanaged. We must invest intensely and systematically in our human resources. We must fight for economic development, social justice and democratic institutions. In this context, armed forces are a heavy burden on our budgets, in addition to being a constant source of tension and repression. Would it not be better to devote to health the $191 billion that the developing countries squander on their armed forces? Would it not be better to allocate to education the $22 billion spent on arms transfers to the third world? Our historical experience makes us witness to, and an example of, the multifaceted and positive relationship between disarmament and development.

In the sphere of conventional disarmament, my country advocates the adoption of measures to combat arms transfers that undermine national and regional security and development. The countries that produce and market arms must exercise effective control over their exports. In this respect, regional and subregional cooperation to combat the illicit production of and trade in arms is indispensable. We support the widening of the Register of Conventional Arms. We also support prohibiting transfers of *matériel*, military personnel and financial and logistical support to States whose military or paramilitary units or security forces are involved in violations of human rights, or contribute to them. That prohibition should also be extended to those States that do not respect minimum democratic and civic guarantees. We believe that arms exports to countries that do not declare their transfers to the United Nations must be prohibited. In addition, that prohibition should be extended to States that have not signed the main instruments of human rights, international humanitarian law and disarmament.

We support the initiative to introduce an international code of conduct on arms transfers, adopted and endorsed by a group of Nobel Prize winners, including the former President of Costa Rica, Dr. Oscar Arias. We believe that all these measures should be incorporated into an international agreement binding on all arms-producing States. Nonetheless, we are pleased to note the unilateral adoption of some of these measures, in particular by the European Union.

As for small arms and light weapons, we believe that all States must adopt measures to control and restrict the use, possession and transfer of all types of small arms and to gather and destroy as many of them as possible. We support the holding of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, at the latest by the year 2001, with a view to adopting a legally binding instrument. We are in favour of the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms on that possible international conference.

With regard to anti-personnel landmines, we appeal to those States that have not yet ratified the Ottawa Convention to do so as soon as possible. My Government firmly supports the various projects aimed at eradicating definitively this type of cruel and indiscriminate weapon. In this context, the international community must continue to support demining programmes, programmes to assist victims and education for the population at risk.

In respect of nuclear disarmament, my delegation is concerned about nuclear testing in South Asia. We strongly and energetically appeal to those States that are not yet parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to immediately cease developing nuclear weapons and as soon as possible unconditionally adhere to that international instrument. Likewise, we appeal to all States that have not yet ratified or signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to do so soon. Nuclear-weapon States have a particular obligation to ratify or sign that Treaty and thus show their leadership in the international community. Their ratification is indispensable if we are to avoid a new arms race. We are convinced that the Treaty's entry into force is an urgently needed step to guarantee the security of all humankind. We note and support the majority appeal made for prompt ratification of this Treaty last week in Vienna during the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Furthermore, my delegation trusts in the goodwill of all participants in the preparatory process of the NPT review conference with regard to adopting concrete measures to reduce the nuclear risk and reactivate negotiations on nuclear disarmament. We also trust in the will to extend, strengthen and respect nuclear-weapon-free zones and to meet the wishes of States that want to establish new zones.

In the present circumstances of international policy, nuclear weapons are neither strategically nor logistically useful. States with a nuclear capacity must recognize that fact and reduce their dependency on such weapons. If they do it will be easier for them truly to commit themselves to nuclear disarmament negotiations, adopt a no-first-use policy, deactivate their offensive systems and halt the development of a new nuclear arsenal. These States must begin a progressive, systematic and firm process of dismantling their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction.

My country has made of disarmament something more than a foreign policy objective. We are a country that has been disarmed for 50 years, and for this reason at both the national and international level we are consistently and invariably committed to disarmament in all its forms. We believe that the arms race is contrary to the objectives of peace, security and development of the modern world. We appeal again for the economic resources that the world today devotes to conventional and nuclear weapons to be devoted in future to promoting genuine economic and social development and equity for all peoples.

Mr. Salazar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over this important Committee. We are convinced that with your experience our work under your leadership will be brought to a successful conclusion. To this end, I offer you the complete support of my delegation. I also thank Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for the magnificent work he has done in a very short period, and also for the important initiatives and projects undertaken since he assumed the leadership of the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

The arms race which characterized the confrontation between the two antagonistic blocs during the cold war kept the world in a state of impotence, and with a fatalistic attitude, as regards the possibility of achieving effective disarmament measures. The relaxation of international tension now gives States new incentives to reduce the production and acquisition of weapons and reallocate to socially productive purposes resources that had been devoted to armaments. Today we see the possibility of reaching multilateral agreements that could resolve problems persisting from the past as well as the new problems that have emerged on the international scene.

As we approach the end of this century, which surely will be remembered as the one in which mankind developed and used its most powerful weapon yet, the nuclear weapon, we must lay the foundation for a new collective consciousness directed towards the quest for peace and security by means other than armed confrontation, and give thought to the realities and contradictions involved in the disarmament process.

The current international situation offers the potential for accomplishing the goals established by the international community in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I). We must not bequeath to our children a world in which expenditure on arms acquisitions and researching and developing new weapons is much greater than investments in social development, education and the eradication of poverty. As the Secretary-General once rightly asked, where is the logic in producing arms, when the best prospect is that they will never be used? That applies particularly to nuclear weapons, which cannot be used without causing a world catastrophe. It does not seem to be an intelligent way to use either the world's resources or the human person's technological capacity.

The international community has wasted at least two clear opportunities to rid itself of these terrible weapons: first, in 1945, after their first use and after their awful effects had been seen, and, secondly, at the end of the cold war. How many more opportunities must we lose before we become fully aware of the irrationality of the very existence of these weapons?

But the era of disarmament has yet to come. Countries still think in terms of military alliances and strategic defence doctrines involving the use of nuclear weapons. In addition, technological developments are proposed that pose the risk not only of transforming outer space into an area of military confrontation, but also of altering the precarious existing strategic balance. In other words, in spite of advances in regard to prohibiting certain types of weapons, we are far from approaching the ideal world, in which resources and technology would be devoted to education for peace, medical developments and the eradication of hunger and poverty.

On the subject of small arms, we are no longer in the era of the novel "The Red and the Black"; war no longer gives dignity to anyone, although for some it continues to be a way to get rich, a way that is not only illicit, but criminal. Once conquering the enemy was a symbol of bravery, strength and courage, but to kill women and children, as happens in most conflicts today, brings no honour. Combat has left the battlefields and entered the villages and towns. The warriors become child soldiers. The enemy is no longer represented by armies, but by the civilian population.

The trafficking in and excessive circulation of small arms are scourges that jeopardize the well-being of a population and the social and economic order of the affected countries, and have a negative impact on international peace and security. As a result, consideration of these problems has gained a political impetus, as was seen in the ministerial debate just a few weeks ago in the Security Council.

Colombia attaches great importance to the international conference on the illicit arms trade to be held no later than

2001, in accordance with resolution 53/77 E. We welcome the report (A/54/258) of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, submitted by the Secretary-General, and its recommendations, particularly on the objectives and scope of the conference. It is now necessary to begin the preparatory process, to set a specific date and venue for the conference, its agenda, scope, objectives and expected outcome.

I turn to the subject of nuclear weapons. Next year the review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will be held here in New York. Although we made significant progress at the third preparatory meeting, the expectation of substantive results at the review conference is of vital importance to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The conference in the year 2000 will be the first review conference following the adoption of the indefinite extension. It is necessary to strengthen the review process as part of the 1995 agreements, combining a broad concept of global security with the prospect of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The nuclear tests held last year in South Asia are a challenge to the non-proliferation regime, and unless the international community can show progress in a true process of nuclear disarmament we run the risk of a setback in the advances made with the NPT in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The international community must clearly see that there is an agenda for nuclear disarmament, and it requires a deeper commitment by the nuclear-weapon States.

The Conference on Disarmament closed its 1999 session without reaching agreement on its programme of work. There was only agreement on the admission of five new members, which brings the composition of the Conference to 66 members. Nonetheless, those who argue that a larger membership hampers the negotiating capacity of the Conference on Disarmament, or its efficiency, are mistaken. Colombia considers that the Conference on Disarmament should be open to all States wishing to participate. It is not the number of members that hinders its work, but lack of political will and of a clear commitment by some countries to disarmament.

I come now to the question of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Although the Disarmament Commission was unable to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda for such a session, we remain of the view that it is necessary to take advantage of the work done so far and to press for a consensus that will allow the session to be convened in the not too distant future. A fourth special session would allow us to consider, among other threats to international peace and security, the continued modernization of certain types of weapons and the use of technological advances for military purposes.

On other arms control agreements, Colombia supports the negotiating process now under way in Geneva on a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which should be ready before the review conference to take place in the year 2001. In connection with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Colombia is making progress on ratification, which is now under consideration in our Congress.

Colombia is one of the 44 States listed in annex 2 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and hopes to complete the steps that will make it possible for us soon to ratify the Treaty. We supported and participated in the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was held last week in Vienna, and completely support its recommendations.

Colombia also signed the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines, and is pressing forward with the process for its ratification. We participated as observers in the First Meeting of the parties, held in Maputo in May this year.

Colombia wishes to continue to contribute to the fashioning of instruments to make possible real progress on disarmament, because that is the only way in which we can move beyond the horrors of war and violence in a world that is clamouring for peace and security.

Mr. Al-Ghanim (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the delegation of the State of Kuwait, our warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at this session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your competence, experience and wide knowledge will help you to successfully guide the Committee's deliberations. You are assured of my delegation's serious and constructive cooperation in order to achieve the goals of the Committee. I am also pleased to extend our congratulations on their election to the other members of the Bureau and to wish them success. I also pay tribute to the considerable efforts made by the outgoing Chairman and other members of the Bureau, which were marked by a sincere wish to improve the conduct of the Committee's proceedings.

As we enter the third millennium, the rapid pace of international change and the interconnectedness and impact of States' interests highlight the need to strengthen ties of cooperation and solidarity at the international level, because international security is indivisible. The peaceful resolution of all conflicts is the sole means by which international security can be achieved in the face of such international challenges and circumstances. History has proved that international solidarity and cooperation are the two deterrents to any action that threatens international peace and security. The manifestations of international cooperation are more evident in the field of disarmament, which curbs bloodshed and the outbreak of wars in hotbeds of tension.

This century has been plagued by bitter memories of two world wars and many civil and regional wars and conflicts, whose victims have been millions of innocent people. The arms race, either for considerations of security or expansion, has eaten up the economies of the developing countries at the expense of their development and economic programmes. The proliferation of conventional weapons and the fervent desire of States to enhance their military arsenals cause concern and call for serious international cooperation to curb this phenomenon in a manner that will help to maintain international peace and security and enhance confidence-building among States and peoples. Support is needed for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a mechanism to reduce military expenditures and channel the financial surplus to the development process in the developing countries, particularly in the light of the deteriorating economic situation in most countries.

Anti-personnel landmines cause us concern. The danger is not confined to military personnel in times of war, but goes far beyond that; they threaten international peace and security in different parts of the world. We call upon the international community to look for the best means to eliminate these mines. The people who planted them must give logistic and material support to clearing them. In this regard, the State of Kuwait calls for compliance with the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a major step towards achieving the important, high-priority disarmament goals of the international community. It is also confirmation of the decisions concerning the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and disarmament taken on 11 May 1995. Kuwait, being one of the signatories to the CTBT, invites all States to sign the Treaty quickly. No action contrary to its spirit and principles should be taken. We urge all States Parties interested in the nuclear arms race to immediately ratify the treaties and conventions on halting the production, testing, transfer and stockpiling of these weapons, so that we may have a world free of such devastating weapons.

We also urge the establishment of a mechanism governing the importation, production and transfer of conventional weapons. I wish here to state that it is not enough to produce and sign these treaties; there must be a sincere desire for their implementation.

The declaration of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone is a goal to which all Arab States aspire, yet this goal is impeded because of Israel's refusal to respond to the wishes of the States of the region and the international community. It refuses to accede to the NPT or place its nuclear installations under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime. Therefore, my delegation calls upon the international community to continue to pressure Israel to abide by the wish of the international community to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and thus spare the region the dangers that beset it and threaten its security and stability.

My delegation does not find it sufficient to call for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East; it calls further for the dismantling of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including biological and chemical weapons and fissile material, which cause more instability and tension in this important and vital area. The area has long experienced numerous conflicts and threats, the latest of which was Iraq's brutal invasion of Kuwait and the former's acquisition of chemical and biological weapons, which were used against the people of Iraq in the north, as was stated by Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, on 12 October last year.

To secure a world free of lethal weapons of mass destruction, many States have acceded to conventions and treaties that curb the proliferation of such weapons. The Security Council has proved its important role in this field. A case in point is the provisions of international resolutions to make Iraq free from weapons of mass destruction, particularly after its invasion of the State of Kuwait. By the end of last January the Security Council had set up independent task forces to assess the extent to which Iraq had abided by its obligations under Security Council resolutions. The Secretary-General himself helped to select the members of these teams, who are known for their experience, competence and impartiality. The team responsible for disarmament stated that a number of serious matters had not yet been settled. It also emphasized the need for the inspection teams to return to Iraq as soon as possible. We call upon Iraq to comply completely with Security Council resolutions related to its aggression against Kuwait, particularly the release of the prisoners of war, the restoration of plundered Kuwaiti property, and respect for the Security Council recommendations. This will lead to more stability and safety in the Gulf region.

We warily follow the balance of fear between India and Pakistan in conducting nuclear-weapons tests and long-range missiles. In this context, we call upon the two brotherly countries — the sagacity of whose leaders we trust will lead them to resort to wisdom and avoid being plunged into an arms race — to settle their differences peacefully.

The State of Kuwait welcomes the General Assembly resolution deciding to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001. We are of the view that this conference should follow a comprehensive approach to these problems by studying all aspects of the joint approach to reach its goals.

My delegation regrets the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on an agenda, which led to its failure. In the hope of placing the public interests of the peoples of the world above narrow interests, we call upon all parties concerned to make more concessions in the course of the coming meetings, with a view to stressing the significant role played by the Conference on Disarmament in fostering international peace and security.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Please accept my warmest congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. We also congratulate Mr. André Mernier on his important contribution as Chairman of the Committee at the fifty-third session. Under your leadership, Sir, we have no doubt we will achieve positive results. Your recognized international experience is guarantee enough that the results will be substantive and relevant. Please be assured of my delegation's commitment to cooperate with you in every possible way.

It is nearly a decade since the collapse of the Berlin Wall and we still have not managed to eliminate the nuclear threat. That is disappointing and gives the Organization, among others, the enormous responsibility of ensuring that the concept of human security is not just an objective set out on paper. We know that on the threshold of a new millennium it is increasingly important to provide an accurate diagnosis of the challenges, commitments and responsibilities of the United Nations in disarmament matters. Strict compliance with the non-proliferation regime remains a cornerstone of macro-disarmament. It is neither admissible nor understandable that any State should, under any pretext, depart from this guiding principle.

In recent years there has been important progress on the prohibition of nuclear testing and adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), although some States still show reluctance. Progress with regard to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is also significant. The First Meeting of States parties in Maputo continued that steady progress.

It is clear, today more than ever, that the only security that exists in the sphere of weapons of mass destruction is to take the clear-cut decision simply to eradicate such weapons, whose existence remains a threat to all life on the planet.

We find several challenges in the architecture of disarmament. The Secretary-General has already, in a very timely fashion, signalled a threat to international peace and security. It is necessary to achieve consensus so that new norms, negotiated at the multilateral level, can make it possible for the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems to be a mechanism to prevent the further deployment of defensive systems.

Uruguay enthusiastically supported the Political Declaration establishing the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries and Bolivia and Chile as a zone of peace. The Declaration, which was signed in the city of Ushuaia on 24 July 1998, established a means of support for non-proliferation activities in all relevant international forums. It reaffirmed full support for the Treaty of Tlatelolco and declared the region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Among other commendable efforts, particular mention should be made of the draft resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas, submitted by the members of nuclear-weapon-free zones for the fourth consecutive time, which we hope will be given significant support by the majority of Member States.

With the objective of promoting these efforts, Uruguay completely adhered to the declaration "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", adopted on 9 June 1998 by the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden. We are also pleased to have been part of the effort to conclude a protocol strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) through a rapid international response to prohibit the use of biological weapons. We believe that support for the work of the ad hoc group on this matter remains fundamental, and negotiations in this respect should be speeded up in order to support the initiative of Australia and New Zealand.

Rapid and effective action to halt the proliferation of small arms remains one of the most important challenges on the disarmament agenda in the coming months. Everyone is aware that this subject is as important as many others, since the proliferation and abuse of small arms and light weapons have reached alarming proportions. The number of deaths caused by these weapons is now almost equal to that caused by weapons of mass destruction.

The hemispheric contribution through the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking In Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials is already an important step, strengthened now by the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. MERCOSUR has made a special contribution in this respect, and is already applying the joint mechanism for registering buyers and sellers of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, which is binding on Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. My delegation is convinced that the international community has an important role to play in this respect, and that if we do not diverge on sectoral grounds the present time may be conducive to joint action. In this respect, we consider that the international conference to be held no later than 2001 will be essential to implement measures to combat the illicit traffic in small arms. The forthcoming debate to establish the preparatory committee for that conference will be extremely significant.

The United Nations system has a major challenge to meet in this respect. We know that the task of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs is not at all easy. Nonetheless, the experience, dedication and involvement in these issues of Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala have meant advances in the delicate areas within his responsibility.

I wish to reiterate my country's commitment to the cause of general and complete disarmament, as well as the need for the progress already achieved to be consolidated and for further progress to be made as soon as possible. We all have a duty to ensure that in the next millennium we do not see the shameful toll in human lives that armed conflicts have taken in this century. Uruguay firmly believes in the need to replace the culture of conflict with the culture of peace. All our efforts will be worth while if we advance resolutely in that direction.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/54/PV.6

General Assembly

Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

First Committee

6th Meeting
Thursday, 14 October 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. González . . . . (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Osei (Ghana): I wish to extend to you, Sir, the best wishes of my delegation on your election as Chairman of the Committee and to assure you, and the other members of the Bureau, of our support and cooperation during our deliberations on the issues before the Committee.

Over the past few years the United Nations has frequently been called upon to take up new tasks and confront challenges as a result of the growing threat of the spread of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional arms. The United Nations response to these challenges, which has entailed upholding existing norms or facilitating the necessary political will among Member States to establish new agreements, has underscored mankind's recognition of its common heritage and survival and the importance of cooperation to achieve consensus on measures to reduce, and perhaps eliminate, such threats. Much as we all appreciate that we have a stake in nurturing the environment for sustained negotiations on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the lack of commitment and political will of the nuclear-weapon countries continues to impede the process of nuclear disarmament.

Ghana is committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and shares in the belief in its universalization. It hopes that all nuclear-weapon States parties and nuclear-weapon-capable States parties will do their utmost to reduce the threat of these weapons and abate the gloom that they cause. There can be no security assurances without a total commitment and adherence by all countries to the articles and mechanisms of the NPT.

The third session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT 2000 Review Conference ended on a note of extreme disappointment for some of us, as if no lessons had been learned from the first and second preparatory sessions. In this regard, I wish to reiterate a point made by my Foreign Minister to the General Assembly last month, when he warned that

> "the parties and non-parties to the NPT alike will not continue indefinitely to abide by the Treaty while the nuclear-weapon countries continue to ignore the calls of the international community to abide by their NPT commitments and pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control". *(A/54/PV.6, P.18)*

There is a need for confidence-building measures to be established between the nuclear-weapon countries and the non-nuclear-weapon countries to give a fresh impetus to the global disarmament process and ensure the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is gratifying to note that the momentum gained by the initiatives aimed at eliminating landmines was sustained

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

at the First Meeting of the States parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in Maputo, Mozambique, earlier this year and by the reaffirmation in the Maputo Declaration of a commitment to the total eradication of these mines. There is no need to add that the support of the international community to ensure that the objectives of the Convention are achieved is critical.

Another area of grave concern to my delegation is the proliferation of conventional weapons, notably small arms and light weapons, which are the tools for the development of conflicts in Africa. We appreciate all the efforts to secure international cooperation and coordination in the struggle against the accumulation, proliferation and use of small arms. We also recognize the legitimate right of Member States to acquire such conventional weapons for national defensive purposes. However, their proliferation and illicit trafficking aimed at fomenting conflict must be deplored, and consideration must be given to measures that strengthen control and reduce their easy availability.

We therefore welcome the decision by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) heads of State at their summit meeting in Algeria, which, *inter alia*, urged OAU member States to adopt a coordinated approach to the problems posed by the illicit trafficking, circulation and proliferation of these arms. My delegation also calls on all States to support efforts to stem the illicit trafficking in these arms, by complying strictly with the embargo imposed by the Security Council on the sale or supply of arms and related material to non-government forces in West Africa.

As a reflection of our concern over this menace, and in recognition of the need to address it and the related issue of the forced participation of children in armed conflicts, my Government intends to host soon, with the Government of Canada, a subregional workshop aimed at building on the Mali Moratorium and establishing a framework for keeping children out of conflicts. Ghana looks forward to the support of Member States for this forthcoming event.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): On behalf of my delegation I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to direct the affairs of the First Committee during this session and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our full support.

Virtually all previous speakers in this year's general debate in the Committee have spoken — and I am sure we shall hear more in this vein — about disappointments and frustrations, lost opportunities, prolonged deadlock in negotiations and the inability of the current multilateral machinery to deliver results in arms control and disarmament. In reviewing developments during the past year, we see some positive but faint signs that some could describe as achievements. We note, for example, the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the possibility that some States will implement the core provision of the Chemical Weapons Convention, namely, the destruction of stockpiles and production facilities of such deadly weapons; and the recent adoption by the Disarmament Commission of guidelines on conventional arms and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace. My delegation had the opportunity of making a modest contribution to the drafting of those guidelines, which are relevant to the current post-conflict situation in Sierra Leone and the process of implementing a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme under the comprehensive Lomé Peace Agreement. Many of the provisions of the Lomé Agreement are consistent with some of the recommendations contained in the guidelines.

We must, however, register our disappointment over the lukewarm international response to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone. In accordance with article XVI of the Lomé Agreement, the Government of Sierra Leone, immediately upon the signing of the Agreement, requested the international community to assist with the provision of the financial and technical resources needed for the adaptation and extension of the existing encampment, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Regrettably, three months after Lomé, disarmament and demobilization, let alone integration, have been stalled, due primarily to the lack of resources. This does not augur well for peace and security in the country and in the subregion as a whole.

The cost of disarmament is far less than the cost, in human and material resources, of the eight-year conflict. It is also far less than the cost of any fighting that could flare up as a direct result of the lack of adequate international support for the disarmament programme. The need for disarmament in Sierra Leone today is perhaps analogous to national efforts in a number of countries to deal with the problem of the indiscriminate use of handguns and the threat of the possible use of deadly chemical weapons by terrorist groups against the civilian population.

One important provision relating to disarmament in the comprehensive Lomé Peace Agreement is that a Joint Monitoring Commission should receive information from the parties regarding the strength and locations of all combatants, as well as the positions and descriptions of all known unexploded bombs, explosive ordnance devices, minefields, booby traps, wire entanglements and all other physical or military hazards. The Agreement went beyond that and authorized the Joint Monitoring Commission to seek all necessary technical assistance in mine clearance and the disposal or destruction of similar devices and weapons under the operational control of the peacekeeping force. In this regard, and in addition to the substantive disarmament and demobilization activities, we believe that Sierra Leone could benefit from the [United Nations Trust Fund for the Consolidation of Peace through Practical Disarmament Measures]. We need all the assistance we can muster in support of such activities as the storage and destruction of collected arms and ammunition under the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

We realize that the established priorities in disarmament are still nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, and conventional weapons, in that order. However, we believe, based on our bitter experience in Sierra Leone during the past eight years, that conventional arms, especially the proliferation and illicit transfer of small arms, light weapons and ammunition, can be devastating for any country, both in Africa and elsewhere. At the same time, conventional weapons continue to pose perhaps as much threat to national stability and international peace and security as nuclear weapons. That is why we continue to attach importance to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa.

We would like to take this opportunity to appeal to members of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies to be steadfast in their approach to the implementation of the ECOWAS moratorium. The need to promote respect for the moratorium by other arms-producing countries cannot be overemphasized.

We wish to acknowledge with appreciation the establishment in Sierra Leone of a project by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in support of the moratorium. My delegation looks forward to the extension of the moratorium beyond the West African subregion, and the conclusion, at the earliest possible time, of an appropriate African convention against the illicit manufacturing, importation and exportation of firearms, ammunition, explosives and similar harmful devices.

We welcome the latest observations contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/54/258) on the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and his report on the feasibility of undertaking a study on restricting the manufacture of and trade in small arms to manufacturers authorized by States. We also support current efforts to convene an international conference on small arms by 2001.

When we consider the social, humanitarian, economic and political consequences of the excessive accumulation and use of armaments, and the number of armed conflicts in the world today within and between States, we see that developments in arms control and disarmament are neither significant nor commendable. In fact, these so-called achievements should be merely noted. We should have the courage to re-emphasize the increasing challenge which the threat of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, and illegal arms transfers poses to humanity.

You, Mr. Chairman, and Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala have given us from your vantage point an objective and realistic assessment of the current situation and a platform on which we can base our deliberations in the Committee during the next several weeks. As the Under-Secretary-General rightly points out,

> "together we must refuse to accept that war"

— and with his permission I wish to add "and the threat of war" —

> "weapons of mass destruction or the excessive accumulation or illicit transfer"

— again let me add with his permission "and use" —

> "of arms are now j[illegible]allmarks of the natural human condition". (*A/C.1/54/PV.3*)

Let us face it. When we consider the magnitude of man's inhumanity to man in the form of mass killings and genocide; when we continue to witness the deliberate and indiscriminate destruction of economic and social infrastructures and the extent of the grossly immoral act of diverting resources from the illegal trade in diamonds and other precious minerals to fuel rebel wars and other destabilizing activities; when we consider the excessive accumulation of armaments; and when we count the number of children who through armed conflict we have deprived of their future, we should bow our heads in shame. We should also admit that the twentieth century will go down as the most cruel and insecure century in human history.

It is not enough for us merely to review what we may have achieved in arms control and disarmament, and applaud ourselves for it. It is not enough to pat ourselves on the back for the few slow and faltering steps we may have taken towards the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. At this point we should instead be honest and ask ourselves whether in this century we have really saved "succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Granted, nuclear weapons have not been used in the past half-century, but the threat they pose to the security of all States, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, and the enormous expense involved in the development and stockpiling of these weapons are unconscionable.

The Secretary-General has observed that global negotiations on nuclear disarmament remain at a standstill and that the persistence of divergent views on the most pressing issues on the international disarmament agenda has affected the work of the Conference on Disarmament again this year. In the light of these developments, my delegation believes that it is time to devise something — call it a new momentum, a new strategy, a new perspective, or even a new agenda — to make the nuclear disarmament process at least more credible, something that will give the peoples of the world not just an assurance but a guarantee that the pace of nuclear disarmament will be accelerated and that nuclear weapons will never be used against nuclear or non-nuclear States.

These are not unrealistic objectives. In the view of my delegation, we can begin by giving careful and serious consideration to the initiative entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". That approach is even more relevant in the absence of a consensus on the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and as we prepare for the Millennium Summit devoted to peace, security and disarmament.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin by joining in the congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I am sure that under your leadership the Committee's work during this final session of the century and the millennium will have
a happy and useful outcome.

(*spoke in English*)

At this last session of the Committee in this century our eyes naturally look to the horizon to scan what is ahead in the twenty-first century. But before doing so we must reflect on the century about to close in order to learn from experience. With profound sorrow we must record, as already indicated by the representative of Sierra Leone, that war deaths in the twentieth century were much greater in number than all those in previous centuries from the first century A.D. More than 110 million people have been killed in the wars of this century. Nor has the killing diminished in the last decade of the century, the so-called post-cold-war period. East Timor, Kosovo, Serbia, Iraq, Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Haiti, the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Sri Lanka are just some of the affected areas in nearly all the regions of the world whose hopes for growth and prosperity have been stifled by chronic conflicts.

Despite the undoubted advance of civilization as a whole, acts of barbarism in our time have sunk to new depths of depravity. Exterminations, genocide, mass killings, deportation and tortures in the extreme have scarred the memory of this century. Distinctions between military combatants and civilians have disappeared; human rights violations against women and children occur in unprecedented numbers. In the past decade 2 million children have been killed in armed conflicts, between 4 million and 5 million more have been disabled and more than 12 million have been made homeless. Terror and violence, now so common, speak of deliberate victimization.

Such brutality must be stopped by international legal authority. The carnage occurring within States, as well as conflicts between States, must be addressed by a competent legal authority operating under the mandate of the United Nations Security Council. We will not be able to build a path to peace in the twenty-first century unless there is universal recognition and acceptance that the Security Council is the pre-eminent authority in enforcing peace and security.

We are daily witnesses to cruel wars and massacres that go far beyond all humanitarian norms and in which civilians are often both victims and protagonists. Such conflicts are fed by the availability of small arms and light weapons. The Holy See has repeatedly urged that effective measures be taken to stem the trade in these arms and continues to support that. However important international or regional measures may be, they will not be effective unless States establish national controls on the sale and transfer of such weapons.

Still further measures must be taken to stem the illicit sale and transfer of small arms and light weapons. They continue to find their way into the hands of irregular forces, guerrillas and terrorists, and also play a nefarious role in drug cartels and organized crime syndicates. In this regard, it is encouraging to note the growing attention being given to the control of the sale of ammunition for these weapons. It is also important to continue to reinforce practical disarmament measures by which arms used in internal conflicts are collected and destroyed with the agreement of all concerned. That is a peace-building measure and also ensures that the same arms will not be used to kill still more innocent victims.

The First Meeting of the States parties to the Convention on the total elimination of landmines bore witness to what the determined will of States can achieve in the field of small arms. Every effort must be made to make it universal and to implement fully its provisions. Anti-personnel landmines must be totally eliminated in the name of humanity. The peaceful development of many societies will be hindered until the mine-clearance process is completed. Adequate funding must be assured for both the removal of landmines and their destruction.

While militarism of all kinds must be checked, the abolition of nuclear weapons is the prerequisite for peace in the twenty-first century. What has been promised for a long time by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) must be achieved. Despite all the difficulties of achieving full compliance with the NPT, the Holy See never wavers from what its delegation has said previously in this Committee:

> "Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the twenty-first century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation. The preservation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty demands an unequivocal commitment to their abolition... This is a moral challenge, a legal challenge and a political challenge. That multiple-based challenge must be met by the application of our humanity." (*A/C.1/52/PV.5, p.15*)

The Holy See favours a new set of principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament to be adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The new principles and objectives, building on the 1995 work, should reinforce the political accountability that is critical to the vitality and viability of the NPT process.

It should be an immediate objective of the international community to eliminate non-strategic nuclear weapons, de-alert strategic weapons by removing warheads from delivery vehicles, establish a legally binding, negative security assurances regime, and secure from the nuclear-weapon States a pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. At the same time, the Conference on Disarmament should help the NPT process by commencing substantive discussions on all nuclear disarmament issues. That could encourage and expand the START process, which all the nuclear-weapon States should join.

Various new initiatives, such as the coalition for a new agenda, are opening the way to progress in some of the more pressing areas of nuclear disarmament. In view of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, nuclear-weapon States will, moreover, be called upon to give proof of their determination to move towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Without progress in this field it will be difficult to advance in the implementation of all the provisions of the Treaty and to achieve its much needed universality.

Chemical and biological weapons stand alongside nuclear arms as a threat to all humanity. As a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Holy See will continue to urge all States to ratify the Convention without delay. Its stringent verification procedures guarantee its full observance and yet protect national interests in other fields of chemical production. The Holy See would welcome similar measures for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and urges that the negotiation of a verification protocol to the Treaty be given all the attention it merits at present. The conscience of humanity must make it strikingly clear that all weapons of mass destruction violate the very principles of peaceful coexistence, collaboration and solidarity among nations and peoples.

This Committee has done valuable work through the years. Now, on the threshold of not just a new century but a new millennium, let us pause to put our work in focus. It is not just the details of resolutions that should command our attention; rather, it is the sweep of history. History is calling us forward to use the blossoming of our intelligence and new-found technological prowess to prevent war. Diplomatic initiatives, civil society support, and most of all political will are required to nourish the international community's desire for peace.

We are blessed that new techniques of early warning of conflict are available, along with the tools of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-building. Powerful new tools to prevent war include confidence-building measures, transparency and information exchange, mutual constraints on force deployments, negotiated reductions in armed forces, and restrictions on the arms trade. All these approaches to peace need to be combined into a unified programme to prevent war. A comprehensive approach reflecting new ways of thinking, new understandings, and new solutions to security, will strengthen existing peacemaking and disarmament programmes.

It may indeed take a long time to build a permanent global security system, but if it is taken in phases people will take heart that movement to fulfil a vision is occurring. Sequenced steps making war rare along the way will save thousands of lives and huge sums of money. The length of time to achieve the goal of a world without war should not deter us from starting now. Without such a programme, the killing will continue.

We must begin the new millennium with the firm conviction that war is not inevitable. War and mass violence usually result from deliberate political decisions. Rather than there being intervention in violent conflicts after they have erupted and then engaging in post-conflict peace-building, it is more humane and more efficient to prevent such violence in the first place. That is the essence of a culture-of-peace approach.

Overcoming our sadness over the past, we must take hope for the future. As the third millennium dawns, we must rededicate ourselves to sharing in God's continued development of the planet. We have the ability to build peace in the new millennium. That is our great strength. Let us join to create the political will to establish such a culture of peace.

Mr. Amouzou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Like the delegations that have already spoken, the delegation of Togo wishes, through me, to warmly congratulate you, Sir, upon your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. The choice is not random; it is the natural continuation of a career devoted to the promotion of international peace and security and a recognition of your skills and competence. My delegation assures you of its cooperation and expresses its conviction that our work will be successful.

My congratulations also go to the Secretary-General, who has spared no effort to maintain and promote international peace and security.

The present session, which closes the twentieth century, is an opportunity for States to ask themselves questions about the political will and readiness to promote the conditions needed to allow the United Nations to achieve its disarmament, peace and security objectives. That is so because the issue of disarmament and international security is still at the heart of the priorities of the international community, despite the efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The picture of the world as the century fades scarcely gives reason for optimism about peace. More than in previous years, the last two years of the century have witnessed numerous developments that threaten the implementation of existing international disarmament agreements. Whether in regard to nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction or small arms and light weapons, the present world situation is very alarming, and it seems that the advent of a world of peace is not exactly in the offing.

That is why my delegation echoes the concerns expressed here by many representatives, given the setbacks in international action for nuclear disarmament and for an end to the arms race. We appeal to the international community, and particularly the countries directly concerned, to pursue efforts to put a definitive end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the threat that it poses.

The phenomenon of small arms and light weapons and the illicit traffic in them is of great concern to my country, and I should therefore like to devote the rest of my remarks to the issue.

As we note from the conclusions drawn by the Panel of experts established by the Secretary-General in 1996, there are three main reasons for the accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons. First, States — suppliers and receivers — refuse to limit the production, delivery and acquisition of these weapons to the quantities necessary to ensure their self-defence, national and collective, and their domestic security. Secondly, States — suppliers and receivers — are not able to exercise effective control, allowing them to prevent the acquisition, delivery, transit or circulation of these weapons. Thirdly, small arms and light weapons are used in armed conflicts or in criminal activities, such as arms trafficking or drug trafficking, or other activities contrary to domestic and international law.

As we can see, the phenomenon is exacerbated by the lack of internationally recognized standards aimed at limiting the accumulation and transfer of these weapons.

For the African States especially, which unfortunately are confronted by wars and crises of all types, the issue of the circulation of small arms and light weapons is at the core of our priorities, as the Secretary-General noted in his report (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, and his related progress report (S/1999/1008). Togo therefore participates actively in all regional initiatives to curb this scourge, *inter alia* through the moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, signed in Abuja, Nigeria on 31 October 1998, and the programme for coordination and assistance for the development of security and development that derives from it.

At the national level the Government of Togo has set up a national committee to combat the proliferation and illicit holding of small arms. However, concerted international action seems the only way to achieve a lasting solution to the problem. In that connection, my country welcomes the United Nations initiatives to restrain and thwart this phenomenon, and very much hopes that the international conference decided upon by the General Assembly in resolution 53/77 E of 6 December 1998, and scheduled to be held in Geneva in 2001, will make it possible to find effective solutions.

Here it is appropriate for my delegation to emphasize significance of the role of institutions such as the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, in Asia, Latin America and Africa. With respect in particular to the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, which has its headquarters in my country, the Secretary-General in his report (A/54/332) on the Centre rightly noted the important role it has played in the elaboration of regional confidence-building measures to strengthen socio-political stability and security in the African States.

The views of the Secretary-General are consistent with the decision adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at their thirty-fifth summit meeting in Algiers in July, a decision which reaffirmed the need to establish close cooperation between the Regional Centre and the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, and with subregional organizations working in the areas of peace, security and development.

Since it got straight down to revitalizing itself after the appointment of a Director, the Regional Centre has engaged in a number of activities, including the workshop on the illicit trafficking in small arms, held in Lomé from 2 to 4 August 1999. That workshop gave representatives from more than 25 African countries an opportunity to identify practical ways to stem the flow of small arms in Africa and propose strategies to collect and destroy them. That initiative should certainly be renewed if financial resources allow.

As we have noted, the United Nations regional centres in Africa, Asia and Latin America have a prime role to play in the present context as regards maintaining and promoting peace at the subregional level. Regrettably, however, their financial situation is critical. It is therefore desirable that the international community should decide to provide adequate logistical and financial support so that they can properly fulfil their mission.

My country, which remains firmly attached to the concept of micro-disarmament, wishes to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the international community once more to the disastrous consequences of small arms, particularly in developing countries, where they foment conflict. There is no doubt that solving this question will make it possible to guarantee peoples throughout the world a secure environment, one that is propitious for sustainable development.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to convey to you, Sir, our congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of this significant Committee. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I am confident that thanks to your wide experience and valuable guidance our deliberations will be successful and our work in the First Committee will produce positive results in the interests of international peace and security.

The United Nations was established 54 years ago as an Organization intended to rid humanity of destruction and the scourges of war in order to build a new world based on peace, justice and international law. From its inception, and by its resolution 41 (I), the General Assembly confirmed the central role of disarmament in achieving peace and security. However, what we are witnessing today runs counter to the desire of the founding fathers of the international Organization.

The end of this century is witnessing an escalation of the arms race and the breaking out of age-old, bloody conflicts, whether religious, racial, nationalistic or tribal. Instead of our achieving world peace, prosperity and development, these unprecedented conflicts appeared on the international scene as a result of ferocious rivalry for influence and hegemony, and the new role of the arms mafia and the huge multinational corporations, with their intertwined economic interests, whose only aim is the sowing of the seeds of instability, the waging of wars and the nurturing of their interests to meet their insatiable desire for raw materials in return for the production of lethal weapons. Mr. Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, described this phenomenon as the globalization of the military industries. It makes it difficult for Governments to control the flow of weapons when the special interests of the companies producing arms run counter to the commitments of Member States to peace and security.

The arms race is escalating at both the regional and international levels. Military expenditures are doubling, according to recent statistics. Arms sales last year reached more than $21 billion, and developing countries have spent about 70 per cent of that amount in the last decade. This was at the expense of development and led to the eruption and perpetuation of civil wars and the obstruction of sustainable development.

The hegemony of the big Powers accounts for 80 per cent of arms sales. Some of these big Powers possessing great arsenals of nuclear and conventional weapons are doubling their military budgets for hegemony, for interfering and terrorizing weak peoples, instead of reducing their stockpiles and giving effective safeguards to the non-nuclear States against various threats. At the same time, they persist in producing weapons and selling them to small countries, a factor that led to the start of the arms race and the worsening of economic and social problems, because some of those States set aside a large part of their resources for defence expenditures instead of using them for development and the prosperity of their peoples.

One super-Power calls on other States to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to cease nuclear tests, but that State has not ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and it overlooks the testing and possession by another State of such lethal weapons. In the meantime, it prevents other States from possessing such weapons, even conventional weapons that they need for self-defence against external dangers and challenges. If we work for a better and safer world based on peace and justice, we must avoid being selective in the field of arms, their development, possession and production.

One matter of great concern is the fact that the end of the cold war has not reduced or ended the risk of a sudden nuclear war, which still hangs over the world, especially since there are between 30,000 and 40,000 nuclear bombs, one-sixth of which are installed in rockets ready for launching in seconds. Despite conventions and agreements between nuclear States to avoid such risks, the events that took place a few months ago during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) raids against Kosovo and Serbia prove the possibility, at least theoretically, that such horrific events could take place.

The risks associated with nuclear weapons are even greater, because of the arms race in outer space. Thirteen years have elapsed since the horrific Chernobyl incident, which generated fear throughout the world. The repetition of such an event, the most recent of which took place in the Far East, is a matter of great concern, because of the terrors of radiation for man and animal and plant life, in spite of all safety measures. The use of nuclear weapons does not allow for any error in operation or in design. Furthermore, the problem of nuclear waste, which has not yet been radically solved by scientists, is a matter causing great unease, because dumping it in the seas, oceans or deserts poses future risks not only for the environment, but also for all human beings.

We look forward to the convening of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and success in achieving its goals. However, we wish to confirm that finding permanent, just and peaceful solutions to international problems is the only way to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The best solution is nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-frame that ensures humanity's survival.

We strongly support the efforts of the international community to establish more nuclear-weapon-free zones in the world as an important step to promote the implementation of the NPT and nuclear disarmament. It is also an effective way to promote international peace and security. Therefore, my country signed the African

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Pelindaba Treaty. Other treaties in this respect have made the southern hemisphere free of nuclear weapons. That is a significant contribution towards the desired goal — the creation of a world free of nuclear weapons. In this respect, the international community has to make further efforts in order to turn the Arab and South Asia regions into nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Arab region is threatened by the nuclear weapons possessed by Tel Aviv. Recent reports confirm that Tel Aviv occupies sixth place in the nuclear world, since it possesses between 300 kilograms and 500 kilograms of plutonium for use for military purposes, an amount that can produce more than 250 nuclear weapons. The Middle East is suffering today from an obvious and serious disequilibrium because of the accession of all Arab States to the NPT and their commitment to the Treaty. In the meantime, Tel Aviv has neither acceded to nor signed the Treaty. It has also rejected International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards over its nuclear reactors and installations, and it has for a quarter of a century rejected the calls of the international community to turn the area into a nuclear-weapon-free zone. It still dumps nuclear waste in the occupied Arab territories and continues its programme of developing all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, biological or chemical, because of the world's inaction and the double standards that the great Powers apply. The best evidence of that is the well-known incident of the El-Al aircraft in Amsterdam.

The lethal weapons possessed by Tel Aviv constitute a permanent threat hanging over the peoples of the region as well as over the peoples of adjacent areas. Unless these lethal weapons are destroyed soon, the efforts of the international community aimed at non-proliferation will be a dismal failure.

We oppose the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and call for the elimination of stockpiles of them, because they lead to an escalation of conflicts and pose a threat to peace and security. We call for further international cooperation and coordination to control that, especially in areas of conflict. We also welcome an international conference to discuss the various aspects of this issue and to take effective regional and international measures in this respect.

In addition to the interest of the international community in the problems of small arms and light weapons and the risks associated with them and the regional conflicts and wars they nurture throughout the world, the problem of landmines, their dangers and horrific results has been accorded the priority it deserves by the international community. The conclusion of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and its entry into force, is but a small step in the right direction.

However, that Treaty overlooked other mines as well as a decision on the legal responsibility of the colonial States and warring countries that had planted the mines in the territories of other States. The General Assembly and regional and international organizations confirmed the principle of the responsibility of these States and the principal role they must assume, including the payment of compensation to the victims and assistance in developing comprehensive programmes in this area. But all that has remained a dead letter.

My country has suffered from the problem of mines planted by the warring States on our territory during the Second World War, because Libyan territory was the scene of ferocious battles between the Allies and the Axis forces. Millions of mines were planted, which led to our territory's being turned into killing grounds where hundreds of Libyans were killed and thousands were maimed. Therefore, the development process in these areas came to a halt. Land reclamation, exploration of natural resources, drilling for oil and combating desertification also came to a halt, because the Libyan authorities lack maps and other information on the location of these mines. Recently an agreement was reached between Libya and Italy in which Italy pledged to assist in the clearance of these mines and also to assist in building a medical centre for artificial limbs and providing a social fund to help the disabled and other victims. We hope that other warring countries will follow suit and help Libya to eliminate this problem, which arose as a result of their military activities there. We also hope that they will contribute to United Nations funds to help countries suffering from this problem.

Libya, which is situated on the south coast of the Mediterranean, has one of the longest coasts on the Mediterranean. Therefore, it believes in the importance of turning the sea into an area of peace, security and cooperation for all the littoral States and away from the threat of weapons of mass destruction, tensions, military bases and foreign fleets, so that the people of the area can enjoy tranquillity, stability, prosperity and peace with justice, because without justice peace cannot be achieved.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the efforts of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala. We hope that he and his colleagues will have further success in their mission. We confirm our full cooperation with him in the various activities aimed at the achievement of our desired goals. We cannot fail to pay tribute also to the efforts of non-governmental organizations in this respect, especially their efforts to alert international public opinion to the risks of nuclear weapons. We also wish to register the fact that some of them are not objective and apply double standards with regard to the production of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Mr. Bivero (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Venezuela congratulates you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. We are pleased to see a representative of a Latin American country taking up such an important responsibility at this time. We are convinced that your personal experience and professional skills guarantee that the Committee will successfully carry out the delicate and complex tasks entrusted to it. I should also like to express our gratitude to Ambassador André Mernier, who ably chaired the First Committee last year. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, for his statement at the beginning of the general debate.

The work of the First Committee takes place at an unfavourable international juncture, where uncertainty and the unpredictable nature of events seem to prevail. The first years of this decade were marked by the achievement of important disarmament and arms control agreements. Today we observe with great concern that this trend has been reversed. The disarmament process seems to be experiencing a crisis resulting from inertia and a lack of dynamism in the continuation of efforts in this sphere.

Venezuela regrets in particular that for the third consecutive year the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, was unable to reach agreement regarding a programme of work. This deadlock, which we witnessed when we chaired the Conference on Disarmament in February, is a matter of particular concern to us.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that only through cooperation, dialogue, and respect for the norms and principles of international law shall we be able to find consensus formulas that will allow us to revitalize multilateral diplomacy with an integrated approach in the different actions that should be carried out at the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral levels. The initiative of the countries promoting a new agenda for nuclear disarmament is of great importance, and we fully support it.

Venezuela considers that the elimination of nuclear weapons continues to be a must. We regard the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament at the Conference on Disarmament as a priority objective. The proposed establishment of an ad hoc committee with a mandate limited to the exchange of information would in no way contribute to strengthening the Conference on Disarmament. On the contrary, it would tend to diminish the *raison d'être* and special nature of this negotiating forum.

From this perspective, our delegation wishes to express its concern that the START II Treaty has not yet entered into force. We call on the parties to increase their efforts to comply with this objective and start talks on the START III agreement as soon as possible. Clearly, such actions would help to strengthen the network of international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation norms and principles.

In the context of non-proliferation, Venezuela shares the concern that the international community should unite in efforts to negotiate an international agreement on the prohibition of fissile material. Last year's decision by the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on this matter represents an important element in the strategy for strengthening non-proliferation. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament should re-establish that committee next year, and its members should work together expeditiously in order to attain an objective which at the same time might have a positive effect on the cause of nuclear disarmament.

Venezuela considers that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different areas of the planet represents, in the framework of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, a positive measure that will contribute to strengthening international peace and stability. We support the initiatives to establish such zones on the basis of freely negotiated agreements between the States of the region concerned. We are encouraged by the Disarmament Commission's adopting this year a set of guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this respect, we welcome the efforts made by the countries of Central

Asia. We hope that in the very near future similar initiatives will take place in other regions of the world.

In April this year Venezuela deposited with the Secretary-General the instrument ratifying the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines, thus completing the formalities for this juridical instrument to enter into force on 1 October this year. In an attempt to reconcile legitimate security concerns and humanitarian needs, Venezuela reiterates its adherence to the cause of disarmament and international humanitarian law. My country's participation in demining activities in Central America shows the commitment of the Venezuelan Government to the elimination of these weapons, which cause so much suffering to the civil population.

Even though the elimination of nuclear weapons continues to be a prime objective, the worsening of internal conflicts in various regions has caused the international community concern, because of the impact of the illicit trafficking in, and uncontrolled proliferation of, small arms on those conflict situations. As the Secretary-General told the First Committee last year, the need for strategies to deal with the situation has led to the inclusion of the problem of the illicit trafficking in arms in the list of priorities on the multilateral disarmament agenda.

Venezuela supports the convening of an international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons no later than 2001. We hope that it will make possible the adoption of cooperative measures to face up to this problem, whose links with illicit transnational activities such as terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime cannot be underestimated, because of their consequences for the stability of States.

Significant agreements have been reached at the regional level, agreements such as the Inter-American Convention against the illicit trafficking in firearms, explosives and other related materials, and the initiatives of some African States and the European Union. We hope that at the conference States will reach agreement on the responsibility of producing countries, receiving countries and transit countries. Venezuela recognizes the important work of the Group of experts on small arms in formulating recommendations.

Turning to another matter, Venezuela supports Peru's initiative regarding strengthening the Regional Centre for Peace, located in Lima. We believe that the Centre should receive the necessary resources to be able to work effectively.

The complexity of the international peace and security challenges facing the international community on the threshold of the new century is shown by the inability of the Preparatory Committee for the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 2000 Review Conference to formulate substantive recommendations for the Conference, the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament and the difficulties over the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). What is needed to overcome the impasse is a cooperative approach. In this context, the role of the United Nations, with its disarmament mechanisms, has become more relevant, given the Organization's unquestionable authority and legitimacy.

We are sure that under your leadership, Mr. Chairman, the First Committee will decidedly be able to carry out its tasks and achieve the consensus needed in order to make progress. We are also sure that we can advance in the right direction, given a constructive spirit and flexibility.

Ms. Molaroni (San Marino) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship. We know your ability and are confident that we shall be successful in our work this year.

(*spoke in English*)

I should also like to thank the outgoing Chairman for the excellent work he accomplished during a very difficult year in the First Committee.

I will briefly present the position of my country on some of the issues the Committee will consider this year.

The time has come when we can no longer tolerate States complaining about the high costs of converting arms industries. We have seen too much money spent on purchasing new armaments. It has been proved and calculated that the funds consecrated to military budgets could solve many problems if used for social and economic development. The world total annual sales of major conventional weapons continues to be more than $20 billion. African military expenditures are a staggering $760 billion. In 1998 the five Powers that are permanent members of the Security Council dominated the global arms market. They accounted for 83 per cent of the world's exports of major conventional arms. I am very poor at mathematics, but it seems to me that those activities entail a considerable capital flow.

On the other hand, official development assistance has fallen to its lowest level in half a century. The relationship between development and disarmament is crystal clear. We have been talking for too long, and it is time to act.

The world's stock of small arms amounts to 500 million, and it is growing steadily, as some 70 countries continue to manufacture such weapons on an industrial scale. Between 1945 and 1990 alone, 100 million assault rifles were manufactured. The situation is clearly alarming.

In the broad context of small arms, the General Assembly decided, in its resolution 53/77 E, to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001, to develop and strengthen international efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We support that resolution, in the hope that the conference will help to tackle the issues of assistance to national and local measures for the collection, control, disposal and/or destruction of arms, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and assistance for public education and awareness programmes.

San Marino has for quite a long time been making its contribution, understandably on a small scale, to projects to improve social awareness of arms and landmines in various areas of the globe affected by the problem of small arms, and it feels particularly concerned about the matter. In this context, we were among the first countries to ratify the Ottawa Convention and were very satisfied that it entered into force last March. We sincerely hope that the process of demining will soon receive the funds and attention it urgently deserves.

San Marino believes, as has been stated on many occasions, including recently in the open session of the Security Council on the report of the Secretary-General on Africa, that the problem of the illicit arms trade has acquired alarming dimensions and has to be one of the priorities of the United Nations. San Marino was one of the few countries that responded to the first request made by the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 52/38 J, which calls for all countries to provide transparent information to the Secretary-General in order to contribute to establishing the situation in different areas of the globe and allow the United Nations to create programmes aimed at solving the different situations.

We know that some countries have inadequate systems that fail to control stocks and the transfer of arms, and that the lack of information exchange and cooperation at the national, regional and international levels is still very high. We have to overcome these barriers, and we trust that the United Nations can do better than countries alone.

For this reason also, San Marino is very interested in, and supports, the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), focusing on supporting peace initiatives; arms limitation and disarmament; and information, research and publications in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, North-East Asia, South Asia and Central Asia. We regret the fact that the Centres for regional disarmament remained without a director for a long time, but we are happy that the Secretary-General recently appointed new directors. The newly elected directors have been trying to gather funds to promote projects in their respective areas of action, but they are constantly threatened by the lack of adequate resources. We appeal to all countries to support the Centres' activities. We must remember that the regional level is extremely important. Smaller areas are easier to manage, monitor and organize.

We consider the creation of an African arms database last June to be a very good initiative, but we would also like to see other arms databases functioning around the globe and being regularly updated thanks to the cooperation of all countries.

In resolution 53/82 of 4 December 1998 the Assembly called upon all States of the Mediterranean region to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. That would favour the conditions for confidence-building measures among countries, promoting transparency on military matters, reporting military expenditures and providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms: strengthen cooperation in combating terrorism, illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking; and improve the political, economic and social situation.

San Marino is very pleased that the European Union, together with other European organizations, is determined to promote security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. We are very satisfied with the way in which matters have been proceeding. The ad hoc meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held in Palermo in June 1998, and the third Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference, held in Stuttgart in April 1999, show that the partnership has developed and strengthened, and that it is possible not only in the field of security, but also at the level of economic and social development and cooperation and at the level of development of the rule of law, to create a greater understanding among cultures.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to announce in this forum that San Marino has started in its Parliament the process that will soon result in our ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We invite other countries to join us.

Our Republic is deeply committed to achieving total nuclear disarmament. Every time a nuclear weapon has been used we have all seen the appalling and destructive results. The first resolution — resolution 1 (I) —

> "for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction"

was adopted by the General Assembly in 1946. By now we should all have understood that there is no winner after a nuclear explosion, no stronger Power, nothing to celebrate. It is curious how, at the end of a millennium during which we, unfortunately, experimented in many ways with such devastation, we are still debating whether we should or should not eliminate nuclear arsenals, or, even better, whether we should keep some to actually maintain world security. Maybe it is because San Marino has never had any nuclear ambition that it is really hard for us to understand the position of some of our fellow Member States. We are aware that the costs of disarmament are prohibitive, but we are also aware that large amounts spent to acquire or maintain armaments could instead be used to eliminate them.

I do not deny that everybody should play a role in nuclear disarmament. Nuclear States, or States with nuclear capabilities, should reduce their arsenals, with a view to their total elimination. States producing nuclear-weapon components should convert their production. Nuclear-weapon-free States should monitor the compliance of all countries with international treaties.

As Deputy Secretary-General Fréchette stated in a speech in Vienna at the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), we are

> "at a dangerous crossroads between progressive disarmament and a revival of the arms race".

I would add that it is up to us, and only us, to make history turn the right way.

San Marino is among the countries that have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and we intend to ratify it as soon as our national procedures are completed. We regret that so far we have only 21 of the 44 ratifications needed for the CTBT to enter into force. We share the concern of the Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Axworthy, who stated in a recent article:

> "the ratification and full compliance of the CTBT will be harder than expected and it will take more than a yearly Conference".

He proposes, first, to establish a group to meet between article XIV conferences to facilitate the exchange of information between members, stimulate discussion, and provide for coordination; and, secondly, to extend the office of the Chair of the CTBT article XIV conference to the following conference in order to ensure contact and coordination. We think that these proposals could represent effective ways to help the process. San Marino also hopes that all countries, especially those with nuclear capabilities, will soon sign and ratify the CTBT and the NPT, despite recent developments which do not seem to confirm this expectation.

At a meeting with the Secretary-General on 23 September 1999 in New York, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the five permanent members of the Security Council called upon all States which have not yet done so to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We are comforted by their commitment under article VI and by their willingness to contribute to the successful outcome of the 2000 Treaty Review Conference.

Since becoming a fully fledged Member of the United Nations we have always voted in favour of draft resolutions establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones or countries on the basis of agreements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, such as the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok and the Antarctic Treaty, or the declaration of the single nuclear-weapon-free State of Mongolia. For this reason, we will support again this year any draft resolution with that aim. The declaration of a nuclear-weapon-free zone or country is, in our opinion, a sign of extreme good faith — faith in a nuclear-weapon-free future and the neighbours of that zone or country. Nuclear-weapon-free zones or countries are the healthiest parts of our planet. That should be the meter by which we measure the power of a nation.

Connected to the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones or countries is that of the dumping of radioactive wastes.

My country is still very concerned about environmental norms in the drafting and application of disarmament agreements. Resolution 53/77 C was adopted without a vote last year, an indication that all countries recognize its importance and urgency. That problem, however, still exists. We believe that Governments should introduce or extend programmes for monitoring and cleaning up the areas affected by radioactive or chemical wastes and for the rehabilitation of former military test sites.

San Marino is traditionally and proudly bound to the resolution entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*", and we will also support this year's draft resolution, in the hope that those countries that voted against or abstained last year will finally join the wide majority and recognize the usefulness of such a deliberation.

"Disarmament" is not only a noun; it is a verb. This means that we should put it into action, and not let it merely sit on the pages of our statements, our resolutions or our treaties that have not yet entered into force.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): May I extend to you, Sir, my delegation's congratulations on your well-deserved election and pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

This year the First Committee begins its deliberations in conditions of growing concern over the possibility of a renewed nuclear arms race, regionally or globally, and of the continued reliance on nuclear deterrence and doctrines as a basis of ensuring security at the national, regional and global levels.

Despite some positive developments, to which some previous speakers have made reference, the disarmament and international security agenda today is overshadowed by disturbing developments: delay and additional strain in the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); measures to develop ballistic missile defence that could undermine the strategic balance and stability as well as the nuclear arms reduction process in general; growth in the number of States that are developing or testing missiles; delay in ratification of the START II Treaty and thus delay in proceeding to the START III negotiations; continued failure of the Conference on Disarmament to engage in substantial negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; and the absence of agreement on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV).

In the face of such negative developments, in our view the international community should redouble its efforts aimed at realistically addressing these problems and challenges and perhaps outline the measures that could be taken to reverse these negative trends. In order to do that, perhaps we ought to ask ourselves where we have gone wrong; whether we are making the most of the existing negotiating mechanisms and specific arms reduction and disarmament regimes; whether our efforts and good faith in negotiations are equally matched with good faith in follow-ups; whether the States that under the United Nations Charter have primary responsibility in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security are living up to the Charter or to our expectations; and so on. Answers to these and related questions would be quite useful in addressing those and other challenges.

Mongolia is strongly committed to disarmament, non-proliferation and strengthening international peace and security. My Prime Minister, in his address in the General Assembly general debate at the current session, spoke extensively on Mongolia's position on, and policy with regard to, the pressing international security and disarmament issues. Furthermore, our national position on these issues is in part reflected in the ministerial communiqué of the Non-Aligned Movement adopted on 23 September here in New York. Therefore, today I should like to address only the following five issues.

I begin with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, the ABM Treaty. After the end of the cold war the international community agreed that further efforts towards nuclear disarmament, as set out in the decision on principles and objectives adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), are essential if we are to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. It is in this context that we approach the question of the ABM Treaty. When it was signed by the then Soviet Union and the United States, Mongolia, like other countries, welcomed it as an important step towards strengthening the strategic balance and international security and as a step conducive to nuclear arms reduction. Reality has confirmed that the international community was correct.

Mongolia still believes that the ABM Treaty, though a bilateral treaty, has far-reaching global strategic implications. As the Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement specifically underlined in their communiqué,

> "we are ... concerned over the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of deployment in outer space which have, *inter alia*, contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security."

In this connection, the Ministers called upon the States parties to the ABM Treaty to comply fully with its provisions. Mongolia fully subscribes to this call.

Secondly, I turn to the CTBT. Three years have passed since it was adopted and opened for signature. As of today 155 countries have signed it, and 51 have already ratified it. Among the latter there are 26 whose ratification is essential for the Treaty's entry into force, including two of the five nuclear-weapon States, the United Kingdom and France. This fact alone demonstrates that there is wide support for the Treaty. When it was adopted in 1996 expectations were high about its role. The three years that have elapsed have only underlined the importance of the Treaty for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, for giving a much-needed impetus to the process of nuclear disarmament and, in general, for strengthening international peace and security. Mongolia was among the first to sign and then ratify the Treaty. It is also providing three monitoring stations for the international monitoring system to be set up under the Treaty. Bearing in mind Mongolia's strategic location, the three monitoring stations are recognized as highly valuable.

My delegation believes that the CTBT can and should play an exceptionally important role in nuclear non-proliferation. Its provisions, including the setting up of 321 monitoring stations, are invaluable in strengthening non-proliferation and confidence. Further delay of the Treaty's entry into force would only increase the risk of nuclear testing and thus horizontal or vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is expected that all the signatories will work for the speediest ratification, and that pending ratification the signatories will respect the letter and the spirit of the Treaty.

Last Friday in Vienna the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty issued a declaration renewing the determination of its participants to work for universal ratification of the Treaty and its early entry into force. Mongolia, which participated in the Conference, believes that the declaration should be followed up with concrete practical measures. It is to be hoped that during this session the Committee will be able to exchange views on this question and on how the international community could further the Treaty's early entry into force. That should be one of our primary tasks. Mongolia believes that delay in the entry into force of the CTBT, and especially the attitude of the nuclear-weapon States, will affect the 2000 NPT Review Conference and its outcome.

Thirdly, I come to the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones. From Mongolia's perspective, the consolidation of existing zones and the establishment of new ones in various parts of the world would contribute to the strengthening of the international non-proliferation regime, regional stability and security. In this context, Mongolia welcomes the adoption by the Disarmament Commission at its last session of the principles and guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. We believe that these principles and guidelines will be useful in establishing new zones in the future. In this connection, Mongolia hopes that the ongoing negotiations among the Central Asian States and with the other States concerned will lead to the early conclusion of a treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this important region.

Within the context of nuclear-weapon-free zones, I should like to refer to last year's resolution 53/77 D, entitled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status". That resolution has received widespread international support. I should like to take this opportunity to thank once again those States that have expressed their support for Mongolia's policy and its status, including the delegations of Ecuador and San Marino. Also in this connection, my delegation would like to thank the Russian Federation for expressing its readiness to consider together with other countries the issue of providing corresponding security assurances to Mongolia.

As a follow-up to the resolution, Mongolia, in close cooperation with the States concerned, is actively working to implement it. Two rounds of expert-level consultations have been held on ways and means of implementation, including defining the status in conjunction with Mongolia's international security needs and interests.

The Mongolian Government is presently working on draft national legislation on Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, with a view to submitting it for consideration and adoption by the Parliament in the near future. The law would draw on existing and evolving international practice in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and would reflect Mongolia's unique geographical location. At the beginning of this session the Mongolian Government issued a memorandum (A/54/323) on this question.

Fourthly, I wish to refer to conventional disarmament. In turning to the question of small arms, my delegation can be quite brief. It supports the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects in the year 2001.

Fifthly, I come to the issue of regional cooperation. Mongolia attaches great importance to regional efforts aimed at disarmament and strengthening regional security. We believe that such cooperation could play an important role in promoting confidence and regional disarmament. Last August the Government of Mongolia, together with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, organized in Ulaanbaatar a regional meeting on security concepts in the changing world. Participants from more than 20 countries of the region focused on such issues as the definition of security in the changing world, security concepts, military and nuclear doctrines, the security of small States, information technology and national defence, and nuclear-weapon-free zones. The question of defining Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status was also extensively discussed. The participants all agreed that the conference was very interesting and useful.

The past decade has demonstrated that the regional centre is playing an important role in promoting dialogue on disarmament and security-related issues. My delegation, which tries to take an active part in the work of the regional centre, believes that its activities should be supported both politically and financially. Therefore, we believe that the question of establishing a permanent office in Kathmandu should be expedited and that meanwhile the Centre should continue to operate from New York.

In conclusion, allow me, Sir, to reiterate that the First Committee this year has a special role to play in breaking the current negative trends that I outlined at the beginning of my statement. That could be our contribution to marking the dawn of the new century.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): My delegation wishes to join other delegations in warmly congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We would like to assure you and the Bureau of our full support and cooperation.

The *raison d'être* of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security in our world, as highlighted in Chapter I, Article 1, of the Charter. My delegation considers disarmament and international security to be the foundations for permanent and lasting peace and security on our planet and the twin pillars of a culture of peace.

Disarmament programmes must include nuclear disarmament, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, a ban on anti-personnel landmines and more effective oversight of the production, sale and distribution of conventional weapons, especially small arms. Concurrently we must take appropriate steps to institute regional security arrangements and to prevent, rather than just respond to, armed conflicts.

On the issues of disarmament, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the Conference on Disarmament, although, as a small country, we would have wished the venue for its meetings to be in New York so that we could have participated in them. Our view mirrors the views of the majority of small countries. The Conference has suffered recent setbacks in its disarmament efforts, but it remains a valid forum in which we can coherently address the issues of disarmament.

It is the view of my delegation that the more things have changed in nuclear disarmament the more they have remained the same. For example, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been with us now for many years, but it has not prevented nuclear proliferation, as evidenced by the development of nuclear weapons in a few more countries in recent times. And more and more, with contemporary advances in technology, modern and sophisticated innovations to nuclear weapons technology have been developed. For example, there was the announcement by one nuclear-weapon country of the development of miniature nuclear weapons. A few years ago we adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), but it has not prevented nuclear testing of one kind or another.

The problems we face in bringing about nuclear disarmament are many, but we believe that the principal one is that while the entire world and the people of nuclear-weapon countries desire nuclear disarmament, the political will of the Governments of nuclear-weapon countries is not congruent with the will of the people. Another major reason is that the Governments of nuclear-weapon States consider nuclear weapons to be an effective deterrent in any military conflict and that possession accords to that State a superior military Power status. The reality, therefore, has been that while we have spent years in discussions on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear-test bans we have made very little progress in nuclear disarmament, the NPT and the CTBT notwithstanding.

If the international community is to make any significant progress towards nuclear disarmament, nuclear-weapons States must themselves demonstrate an obligation and commitment to the full implementation of the provisions of the NPT. The NPT review process must therefore be qualitatively different and much more forward-looking. The CTBT has been signed by the vast majority of the Member States of the United Nations, but, alas, only a small number of countries have ratified it. The net effect is that the Treaty has not entered into force. My delegation accordingly urges all States that have signed the Treaty to proceed to ratify it as quickly as possible.

My delegation considers the START process to be a relevant and valuable instrument to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons. We urge that the process be energized and expanded to include all nuclear-weapon States.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in several parts of the world has been a relatively new and welcome development in our struggle for nuclear disarmament. We call upon regional States to support initiatives for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones where they do not already exist. Our ultimate goal for nuclear disarmament must be the total elimination of all nuclear weapons from our planet and the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Fissile material is a principal element in the manufacture and production of nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament objectives must therefore include the banning of fissile material. My delegation submits that a ban on the production, sale or transfer of fissile material should proceed with the greatest urgency. In the meantime, we should make every effort to establish a fissile material inventory and negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has come into force, but in the view of my delegation it lacks the universality it needs in order to be an effective instrument. My delegation calls on all States to become parties to the Convention, especially those States that have the capacity to produce such weapons. We also call for the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) in our view also lacks universality. We continue to call on States that have not already done so to become parties to the Convention. We also call for the early conclusion of the verification protocol and for the full commitment and substantial participation of all States parties to ensure the Convention's full and effective implementation.

My delegation believes that anti-personnel landmines should be totally eliminated from the arsenals of the countries of the world. Anti-personnel landmines continue annually to inflict death and serious bodily injury on thousands of civilians, including women and children. We urge a ban on the use, production, sale and transfer of such mines. We call on all States, in the interests of humanity, to sign the anti-personnel landmines Convention, and we urge all States that have already signed it to proceed to ratify it. In the meantime, we should make every effort, with the necessary resources, to locate and eliminate the millions of mines that have been planted in various countries of the world, and to expand international programmes to care for and rehabilitate landmine victims.

Conventional weapons, especially small arms and light weapons, have featured ignominiously in recent intra-State conflicts. Proliferation in the production, sale and transfer of conventional weapons has exacerbated genocide and ethnic cleansing in some intra-State conflicts. Urgent attention must therefore be accorded to the preparation and promulgation of the strategies to limit the proliferation in the sale and transfer of such weapons, and particularly to stem the flow to adversaries in situations of armed conflict.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations

A/C.1/54/PV.7

General Assembly

Fifty-fourth session

First Committee

7th Meeting
Thursday, 14 October 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. González . . . . (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Samsar (Turkey): First I should like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau upon your election. I am confident that under your wise and able leadership the Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda.

Turkey, like many other countries, is committed to the goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. This goal should be pursued with realism through a balanced approach encompassing steps relating to both nuclear and conventional arms.

Success in disarmament and arms control initiatives depends primarily on the creation of a political atmosphere that inspires confidence. Any disarmament or arms control measure, to be effective, must provide for undiminished security for the countries concerned without upsetting the global strategic balance. It must provide for adequate and appropriate verification. Greater transparency in defence issues is indispensable in order to avoid uncertainty, misunderstanding and insecurity. As such, adequate verification and transparency are two fundamental principles in disarmament.

Turkey sees the arms control and disarmament process as a significant element of its national security policy. With this understanding, Turkey attaches great importance to fulfilling the obligations arising from international agreements and arrangements.

In the conventional arms control field, Turkey continues to regard the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as the cornerstone of security and stability in Europe. Turkey shares the general understanding that the CFE Treaty needs to be adapted in the light of the new security conditions in Europe. In view of the indivisibility of security, it is our firm belief that the adapted Treaty should safeguard and promote the Treaty's objectives, viability and effectiveness. It is our sincere hope that negotiations on the adaptation of the CFE Treaty will be concluded positively and that the adapted Treaty will be signed during the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summit in Istanbul in November.

Notwithstanding the fresh hopes for a safer environment brought about by the end of the cold war, the world has experienced a proliferation of regional conflicts and armed hostilities, and witnessed a trend towards the spread and destabilizing accumulation of sophisticated weapons systems, including weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In view of its geographical proximity to a turbulent region, Turkey has followed with great attention and anxiety the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery since the end of the cold war. We fully support all international efforts and initiatives aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

In this context, Turkey was among the initial signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Turkey is also a party to both the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). In 1996 Turkey became a founding member of the Wassenaar Arrangement on export controls for conventional weapons and dual-use equipment and technologies. In 1997 Turkey joined the Missile Technology Control Regime. Within this framework, Turkey has expressed its desire to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group and the Zangger Committee. It is our sincere belief that Turkey will become a member of these groups in the near future.

Turkey is fully conscious of the human suffering and casualties caused by the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. We note with pleasure the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention as a major achievement of the international community towards the elimination of anti-personnel landmines. However, the security situation around Turkey is distinctly different from that which the proponents of the Ottawa process face. Turkey's predicament also arises from the fact that mines are being used indiscriminately by terrorist organizations.

Turkey is developing a range of bilateral initiatives with some of its neighbours to establish regimes aimed at keeping the common borders free from anti-personnel landmines and preventing their use in border areas in the future. Our initial contacts with Bulgaria to this end have yielded positive results. Following bilateral meetings at the expert level, an agreement was signed on 22 March 1999 by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries. Although Turkey is not yet a party to the Ottawa Convention, it participated as an observer in the First Meeting of the States Parties, held in Maputo in May 1999. During that Meeting we announced for the first time our readiness to sign the Convention at the beginning of the next decade, provided that the present conditions do not take a turn for the worse.

Turkey has always supported international efforts aimed at preventing the proliferation of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, which are not yet covered by multilateral disarmament arrangements. The illicit flow of such weapons to criminals, terrorist groups and drug traffickers is of particular concern to Turkey, and the prevention of such transfers is among its security policy priorities.

In view of the fact that more than 90 per cent of the victims of small arms and light weapons are civilians, the use of such weapons is also a growing humanitarian concern. Turkey believes that the problem of proliferation is truly global and as such requires concentrated multilateral action. Therefore, there is an urgent need for better cooperation, including in areas such as border control, intelligence-sharing, and international monitoring. With this consideration in mind, Turkey actively participates in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and in other United Nations bodies dealing with the prevention of the proliferation and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons and small arms. For more effective international controls, Turkey promotes transparency in transfers of conventional weapons. In this context, it advocates the expansion of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to include the categories of small arms and light weapons. Turkey also supports similar initiatives within the framework of the Wassenaar Arrangement and the OSCE.

Turkey does not possess any chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, nor does it intend to acquire them in the future.

With regard to biological weapons, it is evident that the present international agreements on preventing biological and toxin weapons are far from reflecting today's requirements. Therefore, the conclusion of a protocol that would help to strengthen and promote the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention is essential for regional and global peace.

Turkey has been a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention since 1997, and is firmly committed to its objectives. We also try to encourage other countries, especially those in our region, which have not yet signed or ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention to become parties to it. Turkey has been, and is, determined to continue its efforts towards the non-proliferation of such weapons in the world.

We believe that the spread of nuclear weapons will undermine the security of all nations, and that the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty plays a critical role in preventing it. By establishing a global norm of nuclear non-proliferation, that Treaty is one of the most important treaties of all time. Since the Treaty's inception, Turkey has been an ardent supporter of it and its lofty goals of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. While strictly abiding by the provisions of the Treaty, we have constantly encouraged all countries to accede to it, also with a view to giving more vigour to the appeal to the nuclear-weapon States for rapid and effective progress in the field of disarmament.

With regard to nuclear-weapon-free zones, Turkey has traditionally supported their establishment wherever possible and practically feasible. As the establishment of such zones has a direct bearing on the security of States within those defined regions, and on the existing military balance, the desire for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should necessarily come from all the countries of the zone, and the principle of undiminished security should be strictly observed.

Concerning nuclear tests, Turkey signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on the day it was opened for signature, and it has already been submitted to Parliament for ratification. The Treaty has been approved by the relevant Commissions of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and is expected to be ratified by the General Assembly in due course.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is very pleased, Sir, at your election to the chairmanship of the Committee, a pleasure which is doubled by the fact that you represent a brother Latin American country, Chile. You may count on Cuba's full support for your work. I should also like to offer our congratulations to the rest of the elected members of the Bureau.

Even those who were most optimistic at the beginning of the present decade, when it was fashionable to assert that the cold war had ended, cannot hide their scepticism on the eve of a new century and on the threshold of the next millennium. The legitimacy of such concerns is unquestionable. While the difficulties of the developing countries worsen instead of improving, every year almost $800 billion is spent on arms, and more sophisticated weapons continue to be developed, weapons which are ever more efficient in their function of killing human beings.

The use of force in international relations continues to be practised by some States without qualms, in gross violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. They even try to disguise, under the term "humanitarian", interventionist acts carried out while ignoring the United Nations when it does not serve their interests.

Despite international rejection, the plans for the development of a powerful missile defence programme, in clear violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), reopen the path for the arms race to move into outer space. Furthermore, not even commitments under a limited-scope treaty such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), are complied with by the world super-Power, which, according to recent reports, has decided not to ratify that legal instrument.

As we meet every year in the Committee to adopt a group of draft resolutions that can be used as a reference framework in the design and implementation of the United Nations collective security and disarmament mechanisms, such mechanisms are in practice broken by some States with the military and economic might to ignore them and act on their own.

Cuba shares the grave concerns expressed by over a hundred Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the Non-Aligned Movement in the ministerial communiqué adopted in New York on 23 September 1999 regarding the new Strategic Concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The new Strategic Concept not only reiterates the fundamentals of the well-known, unacceptable and indefensible doctrine of nuclear deterrence, but now consecrates that Organization's right to intervene militarily worldwide. Ignoring the United Nations authority, NATO, headed by the military super-Power, declares itself to be the world's policeman. Without the cold war, and with no real enemy, it becomes an offensive alliance, ready to act beyond its borders and attack without being attacked, when it deems that its interests are at stake. The nuclear umbrella will continue to protect a few select ones, while the majority of the world is ever more exposed to unilateral acts of force.

Under such circumstances, the lack of political will shown by some nuclear Powers in connection with the creation of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament comes as no surprise. The present deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, as pointed out by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, is not the cause, but, rather, the symptom of the realities with regard to nuclear disarmament on the international scene.

The objectives and priorities established by the United Nations in the Final Declaration and the Programme of Action of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which are still valid, will continue to be unattainable as long as some continue to advocate the security paradigm conceived during the cold-war years.

Cuba reiterates its firm support for establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, and it will continue to be our top priority at the Conference. How can one argue that only bilateral formats are suitable for nuclear-weapons negotiations, when such weapons are a threat to mankind as a whole? Should these weapons actually be used, either by conscious decision or through malfunctioning, an accident or a miscalculation, they will not distinguish between nuclear and non-nuclear States, or between combatants and non-combatants. As an immediate measure, an international, legally-binding instrument must be completed to provide the non-nuclear States with assurances against the use or threat of use of such weapons. Such security assurances must be universal and unconditional.

Consistent with its firm vocation in favour of nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons, Cuba has decided to sign an additional protocol to its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreements on the basis of the Model Protocol adopted by the IAEA, as a concrete contribution to a strengthened, efficient and effective international safeguards regime. The signing ought to take place in the next few days, so Cuba will become the first country with an INFCIRC/66-type safeguards agreement to sign such an additional protocol with the IAEA. In addition, all Cuban nuclear facilities have long been safeguarded by this international agency.

At the same time, we reiterate our position in regard to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Cuba has not signed that Treaty, because it is discriminatory and selective in its very essence. The non-proliferation regime established by the NPT lessens the principle of sovereign equality, by establishing two categories of States with different rights and different obligations. In practice, the Treaty legitimizes a nuclear States' club, and since its indefinite extension the nuclear-weapon States have even maintained their right to hold such weapons indefinitely. Such a status quo is unacceptable.

We regret that after several years of deliberation the Disarmament Commission has failed to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). However, we will continue to work jointly with other non-aligned countries in order to have such a necessary session, which cannot be continuously postponed, take place as soon as possible.

Cuba also supports the Non-Aligned Movement's initiative on the holding of an international conference as early as possible with the objective of reaching agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons within a specified time-frame.

An eventual convention on fissile material should be a concrete step forward in the nuclear disarmament process and should not be limited to being just another instrument of selective non-proliferation. Currently there are between 2,000 and 3,000 tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium in the world, less than 1 per cent of which is under the IAEA safeguards regime. The existing nuclear material is enough for more than 100,000 nuclear warheads. It is paradoxical that no international treaty controls the fissile material of nuclear-weapon States, and that only non-nuclear-weapon States have an obligation in this regard under the NPT. In Cuba's view, such a contradiction could be overcome with a convention on fissile material encompassing stockpiles and future production.

Cuba is actively participating in the work of the Ad Hoc Group of governmental experts that is negotiating a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and will continue to contribute concrete proposals to the Group's work. We call for more States to join the annual information exchange that was agreed on as a confidence-building measure at the Third Conference of States Parties to the BWC. Every year Cuba presents extensive and thorough information within the framework of that exchange.

In regard to the Convention on Chemical Weapons, all States parties to the Convention must strictly comply with their obligations, including the submission of annual statements. Likewise, it is worrisome that, in spite of the time that has elapsed since the Convention entered into force, an agreement governing relations between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations has not yet been adopted. In order to accelerate this process, Cuba deems it necessary to guarantee that member States of the Organization can participate directly in the discussions on the draft agreement.

While emphasizing nuclear disarmament as its top priority, Cuba shares all the concern about the illegal traffic in small arms, and supports the bilateral, regional and multilateral initiatives that seek negotiated solutions to this phenomenon. All these initiatives must take into account the circumstances and particular environments of each country or region, with no automatic implementation of formulas.

An ideal forum to address this issue in depth will be the international conference on the illicit arms trade to be held in 2001. The scope of that conference should be limited to the illicit aspects of the traffic, as the General

Assembly has recommended. The preparatory committee must be open to the participation of all States parties and hold at least three meetings prior to the conference. Its mandate must be to clearly define the conference's scope, objectives and agenda. The venue for the preparatory committee's meetings and the conference itself should facilitate the broadest participation of all States. Cuba hopes that the conference will adopt a political declaration and a programme of action with practical measures to combat the illicit traffic in arms.

In concluding, I should like to highlight the importance that Cuba attaches to the necessary observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of disarmament and arms control agreements. Disarmament efforts cannot be separated from those carried out by the international community to promote the protection of the environment. Cuba will therefore firmly support the draft resolution on the issue, to be presented, as in previous years, by the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Allow me first, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. We are confident that with your rich experience and diplomatic skills you will guide the Committee's work to a successful conclusion. In the fulfilment of your duties, our delegation assures you of its full support and cooperation. We would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. André Mernier of Belgium for his excellent work as Chairman during the previous session.

The world situation today is surely not bright. Armed conflicts, acts of aggression and violence, interference in the internal affairs of States, ethnic strife and civil war are still raging in many parts of our planet. Moreover, the unjustified stockpiling and development of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction continue to pose a serious threat to world peace and security. We are also concerned at the fact that the strategic defence doctrines of some major Powers have been updated and have set out new rationales for the use of nuclear weapons. In our opinion, these concepts of international security, based on promoting and developing military alliances and policies of nuclear deterrence, have not served, and will not serve, the noble ultimate purposes of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

With the end of the East-West conflict, normal relations between the major Powers resumed. This brought many people the hope of being able to live in an atmosphere of peace conducive to arms control and disarmament, and especially the hope of making this globe a place free of nuclear weapons. Those hopes, however, have been shattered. Nuclear weapons, unfortunately, remain the greatest menace to the earth. The present situation is bleak. Efforts towards achieving non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament have not yielded the expected results. In the face of such a situation, the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States must work seriously together and take the concrete steps that would ensure the survival and development of all humankind.

It is true that the situation, as I stated earlier, is not bright. However, it does not look desperate. We should in no way be discouraged. Every effort should be made to make progress and gradually achieve our ultimate goals. The disarmament effort is so important and noble that we simply cannot afford to abandon it. On this note, we would like to share the following thoughts on issues of importance to us.

Relations between the United States and the Russian Federation under START I, and the Joint Statement of their two leaders in June this year concerning START II and START III, are positive steps towards nuclear disarmament. In this context, we wish to see the two major nuclear-weapon States proceed to further action for reductions under START II, and eventually under START III, as early as possible. We must welcome any intentions and actions that would aim to reduce and ultimately to eliminate all nuclear weapons from the face of the earth, as set forth in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In 1996 the world community adopted a significant Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), to ban nuclear-test explosions in all environments. It was a great event at the end of this century before turning to the new one. Three years have passed and the Treaty has not yet come into force. A number of countries have said that the reason for the Treaty's late entry into force is that it did not specify a time-bound framework for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons at the global level. We fully understand the argument put forward. However, in our opinion, although imperfect, the CTBT, if sincerely and strictly implemented, would help to prevent non-nuclear-weapon States from acquiring these weapons of mass destruction, and, more important, prevent the nuclear-weapon States from improving their nuclear stockpiles. To put forward a realistic and achievable agenda for the achievement of nuclear disarmament, we think that our Committee should reaffirm its commitment to the CTBT.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes and supports the strong aspirations of peoples in many parts of the world, such as South-East Asia, Africa, the South Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and their efforts for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which would allow those peoples to be free of the threat of nuclear annihilation. In this regard, we are of the view that it is important to emphasize that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones only on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned would contribute positively to the effort to bring about the gradual elimination of all nuclear weapons and promote world peace and security.

The development of a ballistic missile defence system is another subject of international concern. In the view of our delegation, the development of any ballistic missile defence system would not serve the purposes of peace and disarmament that we all try to achieve. In this regard, we think that full and strict compliance with the provisions of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty by the States parties would be the appropriate way to respond to the cause of world disarmament.

Two years ago we witnessed the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is pleased that various steps have been taken in its implementation by the States parties and by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In this context, we express the hope that more efforts will be made to lay the groundwork for the Convention's effective, full and indiscriminate implementation.

My delegation shares the view that it is important to strengthen the Biological Weapons (BWC). In this respect, we note the progress that has been made in the work of the Ad Hoc Group of the States parties to the Convention. In dealing with this issue, given the use of biotechnology for economic development and peaceful purposes we are in favour of any biological weapons verification regime that would take economic interests into consideration, particularly those of developing countries that are parties to the BWC.

Anti-personnel landmines still pose a great problem to mankind. Thousands of innocent people are killed by such weapons each year. We therefore share the serious concern of the international community over the deadly consequences of the indiscriminate use of landmines. In this regard, while noting the adoption in March 1999 of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, we maintain the view that States have the legitimate right to use such weapons in defence of their national independence and sovereignty as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

Today our work for nuclear disarmament is far from over. There is cause for concern over the failure in the final session, held in May this year, of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference to reach agreement on substantive recommendations to the Conference. We further regret that the Committee could not achieve any substantive result because some nuclear-weapon States still refused to agree to begin negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons. In this context, we urge all States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to fulfil their promises and start to negotiate any aspect of nuclear disarmament.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the agreement reached in the Conference on Disarmament during the past two years to establish an Ad Hoc Committee for the negotiation of a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, the so-called cut-off treaty. We regret that little progress has been achieved and express the hope that all parties concerned will show a spirit of cooperation and flexibility and negotiate in good faith with a view to reaching a fruitful conclusion. In the consideration of this issue, there is a need to underline that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament measures are interrelated concepts. In order to ensure success, both measures should be addressed in parallel.

The adoption of resolution 53/77 E, on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001, was an important milestone in the world effort to tackle the problems caused by small arms and their transfer. In this regard, we endorse the establishment of a Preparatory Committee and appeal for its early convening in order to ensure the success of the 2001 conference.

The lack of consensus in the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission this year on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) was a matter of deep regret to my delegation. In our view, SSOD-IV should be regarded as an important conference for multilaterally addressing and negotiating various aspects of disarmament as the world enters the new millennium. We believe that SSOD-IV, if well and effectively prepared, will chart a new course of action in the field of disarmament, building upon the achievements recorded at SSOD-I.

While examining the issues of peace and disarmament, we reaffirm that the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament make another crucial contribution to disarmament. They have been continuing to play an important role in promoting arms control and building confidence and trust among countries. In this regard, my delegation expresses its full support for the initiatives, programmes and activities of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, known as the Kathmandu process, including the meeting on the theme "Security concerns and disarmament strategy for the next decade", held in Tokyo, Japan, last July. Continued efforts should be made to allow the regional centres to go on playing their roles.

As we enter a new millennium, States and nations should focus their efforts on building confidence and trust among themselves through dialogue and cooperation based on respect for the five principles of peaceful coexistence, which constitute a sound political basis for ensuring international peace and security. Such conduct in international relations, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, would help us in our effort to transform this planet into a much better place to live in. In this spirit, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, together with other delegations, will continue to make unremitting efforts in the promotion of peace, stability, cooperation and international disarmament, thus paving the way for building a better future for mankind.

Mr. Salamanca (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. The delegation of Bolivia is certain that under your wise leadership, and with the effective cooperation of the other members of the Bureau, whom we also congratulate, we will be able to attain concrete results. Allow me at the same time to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Mernier of Belgium, for his wise leadership of the Committee at the last session. I should also like to express my delegation's pleasure at the interest and presence of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, in the work of the Committee.

The United Nations was born after the Second World War with the purpose of establishing a new collective security regime as well as policies that would foster peace and cooperation among the peoples of the world. In the visionary understanding of the founders of the United Nations, the aim of preserving mankind from the scourge of war is inseparable from the values of human solidarity. We must acknowledge that the explosion of the atomic bomb was decisive in ending the war and the subsequent creation of our Organization, with the purpose of guaranteeing international peace and security.

Some of the foundations of the multilateral system of international relations were later changed. Furthermore, nuclear weapons became the core of power politics, affecting the principle of the legal equality of States, encouraging arms races, creating international imbalances, and so on.

With the end of the cold war, the international community saw the resurgence of its hope that conceptual ideological differences would diminish and that relations could be based on a shared desire for improved stability, peace and international security. As a result of this impetus, we saw treaties and proposals on non-proliferation, on a complete ban on nuclear weapons, on biological and chemical weapons, on anti-personnel landmines, on fissile material and on conventional arms, as well as other international instruments. Although they were an auspicious beginning and a sign of the will of the large majority of the members of the international community, they have not gone beyond a mere preliminary, incomplete stage. There still remains to be defined the joint participation of the nuclear Powers in order to turn these efforts into concrete realities.

If we add to this picture the nuclear tests carried out in South Asia last year, we can confirm a phrase from the Canberra Commission statement quoted by the Ambassador of Egypt at our fourth meeting:

> "The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other States to acquire them."

My delegation maintains that we should follow the example given by South Africa in 1989, a decade ago, when it voluntarily dismantled its nuclear capacity, thus becoming the first country in history to do so. Let us spread that attitude.

If we look specifically at the question of nuclear weapons, a matter of vital importance for the future of mankind, we believe that we cannot limit ourselves to discussing various international instruments, which, by the way, deepen the differences between those who have such weapons and those who do not have access to this technology and military resource. In this context, we agree with the position adopted by the coalition for a new agenda, in the sense that the existence of nuclear weapons is a threat to human survival, and that it is unbelievable, Utopian, that they can be kept in perpetuity and never used.

Let us recall the words of Jorge Augustín Nicolás Ruiz de Santayana, that great Spanish philosopher, who said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. History is full of Utopias and efforts that have never been realized in respect of topics such as the one to which I am referring. We must therefore ask ourselves whether we are not continuing to propagate Utopias when we ask that the Powers possessing such weapons should begin to adopt measures leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The reality is that membership of the nuclear-weapons club is constantly increasing, while it seems that not all the possible members have joined.

(*spoke in English*)

Allow me a digression at this point, Mr. Chairman. My delegation has seen with great distress, and we believe the international community has seen with grave alarm, the outcome of the vote on ratification of the CTBT in the United States Senate. This only ratifies our position regarding the issue of nuclear weapons.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

As for other items that the First Committee is considering, our delegation fully supports the position of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, and we simply point out with respect to the Ottawa Convention that we hope that the work of the standing committees of experts, which met last month in Geneva, will lead to the immediate implementation of demining programmes in areas where the civil population is exposed to this danger.

At the end of a century considered to be the bloodiest in the history of mankind, in which human beings developed weapons of mass destruction that could annihilate all of mankind, let us reflect with caution and solidarity, abandoning any considerations of hegemony and absolute power. We require a future of certainty, justice, peace and security for our peoples, a future that can be attained only through a general disarmament that would discourage force and foster negotiated solutions to controversies and respect for international justice and law. Faced with the use of force, let us call upon the power of reason and dialogue.

Mr. Amar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. Having confidence in your human and professional qualities, my delegation is sure that you will conduct the Committee's business successfully.

Morocco has always been convinced of the importance of the principles of disarmament, and we are honoured to take an active part in all international efforts to make progress in this area, and in particular with regard to weapons of mass destruction, a matter of basic concern to the entire international community.

In recent years the international community has reaffirmed several times, in a number of forums, the importance of nuclear disarmament and the obligation to work for general and complete disarmament. In this respect, it is clear that article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of that Treaty. Undoubtedly a major element of the Treaty is the commitment entered into by all the States parties

> "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

At the last NPT Review and Extension Conference, held in 1995, in the document on the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament the nuclear-weapon States undertook, in paragraph 4 (c) to pursue

> "systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons".

Furthermore, the statement of the Canberra Commission described clearly the close link between nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament:

> "Nuclear weapons are possessed by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable; it cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any

> state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them."

It is true that the results of the START process are encouraging, but it is essential to continue to work in a more multilateral setting. For Morocco the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole United Nations disarmament organ, has a role to play in nuclear disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament should continue its efforts for nuclear disarmament. The establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament is the best way to reduce the nuclear threat. In order to achieve concrete results, nuclear disarmament should first be tackled in the Conference on Disarmament in a pragmatic, realistic way, without any ideological confrontation, and in a spirit of constructive dialogue.

In a few months' time the next NPT Review Conference will be held. It might seem premature to give a definitive assessment now of what has been done since the last NPT Review and Extension Conference was held in 1995, and of what remains to be done. But we believe it is opportune to touch on some of the shortcomings of this legal instrument, which is essential for international security.

The NPT is a success because of its universality. The fact that 185 States are parties to it definitely attests to the will of the entire international community to combat the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This broad accession to the NPT is without doubt a guarantee of peace and a sign of hope for future generations. The Kingdom of Morocco has always reaffirmed its total support for the principles of nuclear non-proliferation. By our accession in 1968 to the NPT and the Pelindaba Treaty, which declared Africa to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and by our signature of the CTBT in 1996 my country has constantly shown its commitment to strengthen the international legal machinery with regard to both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Therefore, we must deplore the fact that a State belonging to a region to which my country attaches particular importance, the Middle East, refuses, despite the constant, repeated appeals of the international community, to accede to the NPT and submit its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards clauses.

Within the process of consideration and review of the provisions of the NPT, the issue of providing negative security assurances is of particular interest to my delegation, for several reasons. First, these assurances provide a balance between the rights and obligations entered into by the States parties to the Treaty. The non-nuclear-weapon States, which have voluntarily renounced the acquisition of such weapons, are entitled to demand, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons and in the spirit of the Treaty, assurances from the nuclear Powers against their use. Security assurances are also part of strengthening the non-proliferation regime, as such measures are a basic means of building confidence among the parties to the Treaty.

The declaration of principles and objectives adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference states in paragraph 8:

> "further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. These steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument."

It must be said that the NPT's indefinite extension is further justification for these assurances in the light of the declaration of principles and objectives, one of the basic matters to be discussed in the review process in order to reach agreement on a binding text.

There is no doubt that the central idea that should govern discussions on defining security assurances is to remove any idea of conditionality in granting them. The NPT is above all a factor in the search for global security which cannot be subject to any prior conditions. The stability, strengthening and full and effective implementation of the non-proliferation regime, to which my country attaches crucial importance as basic elements of international security, cannot be subject to the constant obstacle presented by the lack of negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT.

The objectives established by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, and endorsed by all the States parties, are clear. The Conference on Disarmament was to conclude negotiations on the CTBT in 1996 and immediately begin negotiations on fissile materials. While we are happy to say that the first goal has been met, nothing has been done about the second — the fissile material cut-off treaty. The continued status quo on this subject at the Conference on Disarmament since 1997 is both regrettable and incomprehensible, because the treaty is essential for disarmament and for nuclear non-proliferation. From the point of view of the dynamics of the situation, it will be a measure both to combat vertical proliferation — increases in the stockpiles of the nuclear Powers — and horizontal proliferation, since it will prohibit all countries wanting to acquire nuclear weapons from manufacturing the necessary fissile materials.

There is no doubt that this initiative, like the CTBT, would make a very valuable contribution to disarmament and non-proliferation. It is therefore essential that the ad hoc committee on the fissile material cut-off treaty be re-established on the basis of the mandate in the Shannon Report submitted to the Conference on Disarmament.

As a member of the Executive Board of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Morocco has been closely following all the discussions on the full, global implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We hope that the discussions on financing the destruction of chemical weapons and on financing verification will end with solutions acceptable to all. Morocco has always supported the idea that the Organization, while remaining committed to the effectiveness of its work, should not solicit disproportionate financial commitments which would make it difficult for member States to help fund that work. Morocco believes that the Organization should also focus as much effort as possible on cooperation and assistance, areas explicitly referred to in the Convention. Their development would have an extremely positive effect on the determination of member States to make headway in implementing the Convention. The development of these two areas would also, I have no doubt, stimulate the interest of countries that are still outside the Convention.

Morocco would like a discussion of ways and means to ensure the Convention's universality, so that its initial objective — a total ban on all chemical weapons — may be realized, for the sake of security and future generations. Stimulating cooperation in this area, particularly at the regional level, is a good way to achieve this goal. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons can and must play an important role in this area.

The international community is increasingly mindful of the tragic loss of life caused by small arms and light weapons in a number of domestic and regional conflicts throughout the world. Morocco appreciates the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts on these weapons, and welcomes the increasing interest in the matter. Morocco also welcomes the proposal to organize an international conference on all aspects of the arms trade. Although international rules on weapons of mass destruction have been agreed, there is no comparable juridical framework for reducing stocks of light weapons, preventing excessive and destabilizing accumulations of them and preventing their transfer. It is time for the international community to unite its efforts to tackle this problem seriously and seek to establish international norms.

Turning to anti-personnel mines, Morocco reaffirms its unreserved support for the humanitarian principles and purposes of the Ottawa Convention. We must, however, reaffirm that we cannot for the time being accede to the Convention; we cannot do so until specific conditions relating to the maintenance of the security of our southern provinces, and our territorial integrity, are met. However, Morocco wishes to recall that it has just signed with the United Nations an agreement on demining the United Nations Mission area in the southern provinces.

Mr. Picasso (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. Knowing your professional and personal qualities, we are sure that the Committee will be successful in tackling the difficult topics that it has before it. I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

A few years ago the peoples of the world viewed the future with optimism and confidence. The cold war had ended, markets were expanding, and the speed with which technology and scientific knowledge were developing was astounding. This positive atmosphere in terms of security, among other factors, led to the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the commitment by the nuclear Powers to work decisively in favour of nuclear disarmament.

However, the atmosphere today is different. New fears and insecurities have arisen, together with reassertions and developments of cold-war theories and positions. The commitments made by the nuclear Powers in 1995 at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference seem far from being fulfilled. Furthermore, the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons has once again become very serious following the carrying out in 1998 of nuclear tests in South Asia.

Spending on improving and increasing military arsenals has increased considerably, bringing the threat of a renewed arms race, even extending into outer space. Multilateral disarmament negotiations have not yielded convincing results, and the collective security system contemplated in the United Nations Charter is being seriously questioned.

In spite of all this, we must recognize and emphasize that there have been other events that allow us to reaffirm our desire for peace and our rejection of conflict. The recent entry into force of the Convention for the prohibition of anti-personnel mines and the holding of the First Meeting of the States parties show that most States are committed to peace and disarmament.

These events are most evident in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the States of the region have repeatedly reaffirmed their rejection of weapons of mass destruction, and within the Organization of American States (OAS), which in the past two years has approved important international instruments on disarmament matters, instruments such as the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of, and Trafficking In, Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, as well as the commitment to make the western hemisphere into an area free of anti-personnel landmines.

This will took more concrete form in the case of our country and Ecuador with the signing of the October 1998 peace agreements, which demonstrate our countries' conviction that peace and development are essential for our peoples, and that conflict and war lead only to more violence and backwardness. These overall, integral agreements also contain elements of economic integration and the development of joint projects. They are a clear sign of a willingness to work together for peace and development, and can serve as an example for other cases.

Peru has a permanent commitment to peace and disarmament. Our country is a party to the main international instruments with regard to nuclear disarmament and other weapons of mass destruction. We therefore regard as indispensable the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime established by the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The complete universality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are essential. We therefore call upon those States listed in annex 2 of the CTBT to take the necessary steps to become parties.

The commitments made at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference must be implemented. Likewise, progress must be made towards achieving a fissile material cut-off treaty, a matter that is at a standstill at the Conference on Disarmament. We trust that the next NPT Review Conference, to take place in New York next year, will achieve positive results, which will be possible only if there is a real desire for non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

We support all initiatives designed to create a positive international security atmosphere. All States have an urgent obligation to complete negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control, as expressed by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion. Peru also fully supports concrete proposals such as those contained in resolution 53/77 Y, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda".

Equally valid are efforts to consolidate existing nuclear-weapon-free zones or establish new zones. In December our country will host the annual conference of the member States of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, and we will shortly receive an official visit from the Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

A few weeks ago the Peruvian Government approved a crude oil donation of the value of $100,000 to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), whose objective it is to avoid nuclear proliferation in that very sensitive area of the planet.

Our country welcomes the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and the holding of the First Meeting of the States parties to the Convention, held in Maputo, Mozambique, last May. Nevertheless, we believe that we should continue to work for a total ban of these devices, which continue to cause irreparable harm to many peoples. The start of the work of the standing committees of experts — Peru is a member of the Standing Committee on Demining — is evidence of this commitment.

In his annual report the Secretary-General points out that although small arms

> "do not cause wars ... they can dramatically increase both their lethality and their duration". (*A/54/1, para. 44*)

In many cases these weapons encourage the increase in levels of violence in criminal organizations within countries, and they can imperil internal, subregional and regional security. In the case of Latin America they are closely linked to organized crime and drug trafficking.

In 1998 we felt it right that an international conference should be convened on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, to be held in 2001. Now we must do the preparatory work for that conference and specify, among other things, its objectives, scope and programme. Peru will participate actively and constructively in this process.

With an awareness of the importance of this topic, the revitalization of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Lima, began last June with the successful holding of an international workshop on illicit trafficking in small arms: regional issues. Thanks to the contribution made by several friendly States, which supported the efforts of Peru and the Secretary-General's office to maintain and revitalize the Regional Centre, it is now yielding positive, concrete results. In December the Lima Regional Centre will hold a new seminar on disarmament and security, entitled "A new Latin American and Caribbean agenda for the next millennium".

We are sure that the regional approach to disarmament matters, and its projection to global disarmament, is important. We are confident that the Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean can carry out considerable and significant work. Nevertheless, it also requires a greater contribution from the States of the region, as well as from those States that are committed to peace and disarmament, so that the Centre's activities can continue to be developed efficiently.

Once more we can assert that secure peace is not possible without sustainable development, and at the same time that development can be sustained only in an environment of peace and security. The enormous resources devoted to war should be redirected to development, the prevention of war and the consolidation of peace. The opportunities to move towards the achievement of a peaceful world, one which is safer and more stable, should not be lost. We must not let individual, short-term interests prevail over the desires and hopes of our peoples and the international community, which together seek peace and development.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.

United Nations

A/C.1/54/PV.8

General Assembly

Fifty-fourth session

First Committee

8th Meeting
Friday, 15 October 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. González .... (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Luck (Australia): At the outset, Sir, may I express the Australian delegation's congratulations on your appointment to the chairmanship of the Committee as well as our best wishes in your endeavours to guide us in our work.

We look forward to this annual opportunity to evaluate ideas and proposals about how, collectively, we might address the enduring task of enhancing peace and security in an evolving international security environment. Inevitably, much of our attention is centred on elements of the international security system, painstakingly constructed over many years, in the fields of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control.

That system is part of the essential backdrop against which contemporary and immediate challenges are played out. These of course include efforts to resolve the East Timor issue, including the United Nations mandated multinational force which is restoring peace and security in East Timor. Australia, for one, is enormously appreciative of the diverse capacities shown by the United Nations in East Timor, not only in the restoration of peace and order, but also in addressing pressing humanitarian need.

For Australia the essential test of the value of multilateral instruments and proposals in the international security field is their capacity to enhance, in tangible ways, our own security as well as global and regional security. Australia's security is determined in significant part through the strength of these multilateral arrangements, as well as our defence capabilities, alliances and regional partnerships, and international diplomacy, together with the strength of our economy and trade linkages. This is perhaps little different from the approach of many countries represented here. While some emphasize the economic and developmental benefits to be gained through multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament instruments, the bottom line for most is a calculation about the respective security benefits.

The task of weighing and assessing these benefits has not been made any easier over the past year or so by a complex and challenging international environment. The recent period has seen a marked easing of the pace of a number of key multilateral and bilateral negotiations in the wake of the boom period immediately following the end of the cold war. The international environment has been clouded by renewed tensions within countries, as well as between countries, often with a strong ethnic or religious component, and disastrous humanitarian consequences to which the international community has been compelled to respond. This has presented fresh challenges to the United Nations itself in determining how the Organization should act in the face of humanitarian crises, knowing that to ignore them is simply untenable, not to say immoral. The recent period has seen a number of challenges to international non-proliferation norms and disarmament aspirations. The immediate consequence has been a heightened risk to both the regional and international security environment and a fuelling of regional arms competition and proliferation pressures.

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The conclusion Australia draws from this broad and troubling picture is that there is still much to be done to constrain the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and prosecute long-standing disarmament goals, including the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. For us these challenges underscore and reinforce the value of the existing international security system, designed as it is to allow countries to address their security needs with the lowest practical level of armaments and, most important, without acquiring weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. But it is also a reminder of unfinished business; of the priorities identified in the 1995 statement of principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament at the time of the indefinite extension of the NPT.

Nuclear testing in South Asia last year underlines the continuing need to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force. We urge all those that have yet to sign and ratify the Treaty to do so forthwith. Australia was deeply disappointed and concerned by the decision of the United States Senate to vote down United States ratification of the Treaty. We urge the United States Administration to continue efforts to build support for the Treaty in order to enable early United States ratification of this important instrument and encourage other countries among the 44 required to ratify before the Treaty enters into force to do so quickly. The article XIV Conference held in Vienna last week underscored the determination of States ratifiers, Australia among them, and signatories to work towards early entry into force.

Another clear priority, acknowledged as such repeatedly by the international community, is the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). We will do all we can in the context of getting the Conference on Disarmament down to work to ensure the earliest possible commencement of those negotiations.

In the nuclear field these two treaties are crying out for attention. Both can bring early security benefits to all members of this body and are practical steps towards disarmament. We need to be realistic, however, in assessing what is worth while, what is achievable — in both the near term and the long term — and what benefits might be expected from particular measures or agreements. The CTBT will make a vital contribution to advancing nuclear disarmament by constraining the qualitative improvement in nuclear weapons. But it will not of itself bring about nuclear disarmament. An FMCT would provide valuable security benefits to both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. By capping the quantitative development of nuclear arsenals — a commitment which all the nuclear-weapon States are evidently prepared to make — it would be an essential step in the process of nuclear disarmament and one which should be seized upon urgently.

But it is not realistic to overload our expectations of an FMCT by insisting on its coverage of fissile material stocks, thus ensuring, de facto, that the FMCT becomes a negotiation about nuclear arsenals themselves. As desirable as this may appear, it is simply not realistic. Too often in the field of multilateral disarmament our endeavours are burdened with unrealistic expectations, sometimes by those least attracted to the proposals in question, with the result that attainable progress and practical advances are thwarted. It remains a reality — building on the evident progress that has already been achieved in nuclear disarmament — that the business of reducing nuclear arsenals will require a determined, and inevitably long-term, negotiation, essentially among the possessors of those arsenals. Those of us most intent on playing a supporting role can best advance this process through pushing ahead on the unfinished business of the CTBT and the FMCT.

The next major event on the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament calendar is the NPT Review Conference next year. We appreciate that there are different interpretations of how best to achieve the NPT's objectives, but we must keep within our sights the vital security benefits the Treaty delivers. It will be important to foster an acute appreciation of the value of all the elements of the Treaty while again ensuring that expectations of it remain realistic. The value of the Treaty is clearly reflected in its near-universal adherence. Universality of the NPT remains an essential objective for Australia, and we call again on those States that have not already done so to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Undoubtedly, fresh concerns about the need for ballistic missile defences and the debate about implications for the international security system, including the ABM Treaty, are relevant to our collective endeavours. We look to those principally involved to negotiate in good faith about their respective security concerns and to ensure that these issues do not provide a reason for delaying progress with other established priorities.

I will take this opportunity to touch briefly on Australia's other security and arms control priorities. A successful conclusion of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Ad Hoc Group negotiations remains a high priority for the Australian Government. Australia is committed to the establishment of a robust compliance regime which will strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention as a further important step towards the eventual elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We will continue to work with others towards the successful conclusion of the negotiations as soon as possible. As part of that process, we propose to take forward the proposal for a high-level ministerial meeting as a means of providing vital political impetus to the negotiations. To secure adoption of the protocol in 2000, we believe it is essential to build upon the momentum gained during the last session of the Ad Hoc Group with the presentation of a range of substantive new proposals, including proposals by the non-aligned group. We therefore strongly support efforts to organize the work of the Ad Hoc Group to maximize the time available for the negotiations over the first half of the year 2000, and would urge others to do likewise.

We welcome the important and positive steps that have been taken by States parties and by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and consolidate the verifiable, legally-binding norm it represents. Experience to date in implementing the Convention demonstrates the strength that verification machinery adds to disarmament and arms control, recognizing that further action is needed to give full effect to the treaty. It is important, however, if the Convention is to succeed in its goal of ridding the world of chemical weapons, that those countries which have not ratified or acceded to the Convention do so.

Australia places considerable store on effective export control measures to meet non-proliferation objectives and obligations. It is vital that exporting States meet their obligations to ensure that exports of sensitive equipment, materials and technologies are subject to an appropriate system of controls. There need be no contradiction between effective export controls and access to the benefits of relevant technology for exclusively peaceful purposes. Indeed, export controls play an important part in creating the climate of assurance and security that underpins legitimate trade in sensitive goods and technology. At the same time, exporters are obliged to be prudent about the lessons of history and the success of a small number of States in international procurement for weapons of mass destruction programmes.

The entry into force over the past year of the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention represent significant steps forward, and underline the international community's commitment to eliminate the scourge of landmines. Australia is a State party to both these instruments, and we are strongly committed to their effective implementation. They are an essential part of the framework aimed at addressing this problem. But Australia is also committed to strengthening this framework where it is possible to do so, and in our view a transfer ban on anti-personnel landmines would complement and reinforce existing instruments. It would be an important incremental step towards the much desired universalization of obligations. Key producers and traders of these weapons stand ready and willing to negotiate a transfer ban, and we should capitalize on that willingness.

We should also capitalize on the increasing international attention being paid to the issue of small arms. The proliferation, misuse and accumulation of these weapons have devastating effects. It is a reality that, as a practical problem of security, small arms and light weapons have a far more direct impact on the everyday lives of people and cause far more deaths, injury and economic loss than weapons of mass destruction. There is a range of highly commendable regional initiatives on this issue already, and in our view regional efforts will provide the essential foundation for the incremental but comprehensive approach that is required.

With regard to our own region, the Asia-Pacific, a number of current efforts are deserving of attention. The South Pacific Forum is developing a common regional approach to weapons control, focusing on the illicit manufacture of, and trafficking in, firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials. In addition, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum is expected to hold a regional transnational experts meeting to discuss transnational crime, including small arms, and the working group on transnational crime established under the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific is considering issues related to the illicit trafficking in firearms.

Australia has long been involved in a number of projects throughout the region and elsewhere aimed at addressing the humanitarian needs of conflict-affected communities. Again, these are incremental steps, but the issue of small arms is too serious and too complex to warrant quick fixes. The 2001 Conference on the illicit trade in small arms in all its aspects should build on regional efforts as well as United Nations expertise in this area and the excellent work done by the Group of Experts to develop practical suggestions for dealing with this problem. For our part, we aim to maintain our national and regional efforts and contribute actively to the international deliberations on this important emerging concern.

My delegation looks forward to contributing more specific comments in subsequent debate on individual items and draft resolutions.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Committee. I would also like to thank your predecessor for the good work he did last year.

In a few months' time we will enter a new millennium. Inevitably we will reflect on what mankind will carry into the new millennium and what we will leave behind. Will disarmament, for example, survive? The word "disarmament" has several definitions. But disarmament in the context of what we are trying to achieve here — to reduce and limit national armament by general international agreement — surfaced as a concept only at the conferences at The Hague in 1899 and 1907. Both ended in failure. This idea of disarmament was not revived until after 1945. Seen in the spectrum of over 5,000 years of recorded human history, it is reasonable to ask whether this 50-year-old disarmament movement represents a new dawn or perhaps only a brief flickering candle, soon to disappear.

Whether disarmament will survive will depend on the amount of good that it does for mankind. That statement may seem strange. If weapons kill, surely the elimination of weapons will bring good. But from the beginning of man we have learned that we can have too much of a good thing. Greek mythology tells us that when Icarus and his father Daedalus were trying to escape from their labyrinth prison Daedalus conceived of the idea of flying off with the help of wings held together by wax. The wings worked beautifully; father and son flew off. Icarus, alas, ignored the warning of his father and flew too close to the sun. His waxed wings melted and he plunged to his death. We should heed that fable as we try to escape the labyrinth of human history. We should carefully weigh how much flight we should take with the idea and processes of disarmament.

Finding the right balance will therefore be one of the key challenges to be faced by the Committee in the coming century and millennium. Disarmament is a subject that naturally invites sermons and speeches as well as passionate believers. Look at the recent debate in the United States on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). If disarmament advocates are to be believed, we should be dealing here with an open and shut case. Yet we are witnessing a stunning event, where a carefully negotiated Treaty intended to put a lid on nuclear-weapon development will have the lid blown wide open. That case illustrates well the central point we would like to make in this debate, that disarmament issues are almost inherently complex and difficult. Many in the world would like to believe that many disarmament issues are black and white — whether they concern nuclear weapons, landmines or small arms. Yet in each dimension of disarmament, if we are to be honest, we face difficult and uncomfortable questions.

Take the global process of disarmament. Since the Second World War it has been launched and driven by the developed States. Only they have had the spare intellectual capital and political and economic muscle to keep the process alive and well, even though it seems to go against the grain of human history. Yet, according to SIPRI, the top 20 suppliers of major conventional weapons are mainly the developed States. Ten countries accounted for almost 90 per cent of the estimated world arms production in 1996. The three largest arms-producing countries, the United States, THE United Kingdom and France, accounted for about two thirds, and the United States alone for roughly half of global arms production. We should not, even if we would like to, claim that the gap between words and deeds represents hypocrisy. It is only a vivid example of complexity in discussing disarmament. We find such complexity prevalent in disarmament discussions at all levels of weapons — big, medium and small. In none of these discussions will we find simple black and white answers.

For example, nuclear weapons — let us discuss big weapons first — are not normally praised in halls of disarmament. They are often portrayed, and fairly so, as the Sword of Damocles hanging over mankind. Only they can collectively eliminate the human race. And it takes only a few fingers on a few nuclear triggers to achieve that. Yet, paradoxically, they are also the weapons that have virtually never been used since the end of the Second World War. One can reasonably suggest that they have prevented a third world war by introducing sanity to the minds of military people who tend to assume that they can always win the next war. In a nuclear war they know that there will be no winners, only losers.

If some nuclear weapons are good, should we not therefore have some more? Not surprisingly, there is at least one strategic thinker who argues this. Professor John Mearsheimer, in an article in the summer 1993 edition of *Foreign Affairs* entitled "The case for a Ukrainian nuclear deterrent", argued:

> "nuclear proliferation sometimes promotes peace. Overall, the best formula for maintaining stability in post-Cold War Europe is for all the great powers — including Germany and Ukraine — to have secure nuclear deterrents and for all the minor powers to be non-nuclear."

Such simplistic logic may work well in academia. In the real world we know that mankind has come to accept the five nuclear Powers as an undeniable and irreversible fact of history. But it is also important and necessary that we should prevent proliferation. In turn, the five nuclear Powers must retain the trust and confidence of the rest of mankind by behaving responsibly on all nuclear issues. That is why the potential rejection of the CTBT by the United States is such a troubling development. It may awaken dragons that mankind would rather see in continued slumber.

The other dragons we should keep in slumber are those to be found in the field of chemical and biological weapons. They can also be potent weapons of mass destruction. Like nuclear weapons, they have been virtually unused in wars between major Powers, although there has been a disturbing tendency of some medium Powers to use them. Given the horrifying capability of such weapons, it is surprising that so few non-governmental organizations and public personalities have pursued vigorously any campaign to wipe them from the face of the earth. We can understand their preoccupation with landmines and small arms, but it is distressing to see disarmament advocates behave like fashion designers, going with the flavour of the day and not looking at long-term needs.

If the elimination of nuclear weapons is a distant dream, the elimination of medium weapons — tanks, jet fighters and naval gunboats — seems even more remote. Curiously, the only thing that seems to have kept pace with the increase in disarmament forums is the sale of these weapons. Indeed, for most nations, acquiring them seems to be almost a test of manhood. We are, of course, aware that not all are calling for the total elimination of these weapons. Most, instead, advocate only a reduction in such weapons. Even that is a goal that most countries do not really aim for. In real life they continue to acquire such weapons.

Here again acquisition need not necessarily be bad in itself. Clearly, the strongest military organization in the world is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Its member States possess the most sophisticated military equipment in the world. Despite this, they continue to build and upgrade their weaponry to maintain a technological lead that is increasing rapidly over the rest of mankind. Yet the possibility of war between any two NATO States is virtually zero, despite this continuous rearmament. Clearly, weapons in themselves do not ignite wars. In some cases they may actively prevent wars, following the paradoxical wisdom contained in the famous saying by Vegetius: "Let him who desires peace prepare for war". There may yet come a time when mankind will set up a collective security order to prevent, and if that does not succeed, to intervene in all conflicts. But we all know that for each Kosovo there is a Somalia. Sometimes the international community helps to defuse conflicts. Often it does not. Self-reliance in defence may therefore be necessary for some time to come.

If self-reliance will be necessary for the majority of mankind for quite a while, it is puzzling that so much of the international community's attention is taken up by the disarmament of small weapons. Most of mankind is still relatively poor. To deprive those people of the basic means to defend themselves would be unfair, for in the event of a crisis they would be defenceless. That is why in our statement to the Committee last year we retold the tale of the three little pigs, and warned that houses made of straw and wood were of little use against wolves. And wolves continue to prey in our world. Certainly we should terminate the illicit trade in small arms, but it would be folly to curtail the legal trade in them.

In the real world the illicit trade in small arms can be compared to the trade in illicit drugs. Yet, paradoxically, the developed States recommend contrary approaches to dealing with these problems. In small arms they try to choke off the consumers. In illicit drugs they try to choke off the suppliers. The only explanation for these strange approaches is that in both cases the burden is passed to the developing countries. The developed countries are as reluctant to choke off their own export of small arms as they are to choke off the consumers of illicit drugs in their own countries. All this only reinforces the central point we would like to make today: disarmament issues are inherently complex.

That does not mean that we should not persevere in our work. Some of the small gains we have made over the years are valuable. We should work to strengthen them. For example, it is a pity that for last year only 66 countries out of the then 185 United Nations Member States submitted returns to the Arms Register. By contrast, over a hundred members are addressing the Committee on disarmament issues this year. We should work towards a more universal participation in the Register before thinking of expanding it. Similarly, we have set up a useful verification regime for chemical weapons. Each such regime contributes to greater compliance, and compliance in turn inspires trust.

To preserve these gains, small though they may be, we should ensure that disarmament survives well into the next millennium. The only way to survive is to take a carefully calibrated middle path that acknowledges the complexity of the issues we deal with. If not, if we try to progress in a linear fashion, arguing that more disarmament is always good, we may end up like Icarus flying too close to the sun with fragile wings, and we will leave mankind stuck in its old labyrinth of history.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus): May I begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the important and responsible post of Chairman of the First Committee at the current session. I am confident that with your rich diplomatic experience and under your able guidance this session will be steered to success and we will be able to find meaningful decisions, so much needed, on the most urgent issues on the First Committee's agenda. On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, let me assure you of our full support and cooperation. I should like also to wish the best of success to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, in his untiring efforts in the field of disarmament.

It is no exaggeration to say that the process of international disarmament is rapidly approaching its critical point. On the eve of a new millennium, many positive achievements in the area of international security and disarmament are being confronted by new and alarming challenges.

Cold war and direct confrontation between the two super-Powers and the military blocs behind them have been replaced by a multipolar imbalance, whose numerous destabilizing factors are fraught with potential regional instability and local conflicts in many parts of the world. The influence of these factors on the international security and disarmament process, which has been steady and purposeful in the last decade, should not be underestimated. Lack of substantive results in the activities of the Conference on Disarmament; insufficient progress in making the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) genuinely universal; the failure of the Disarmament Commission to agree on holding the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament: these are all today's reality. We must face that reality. New approaches and new solutions are needed to break through the monotony of the stalemates.

To be fair, it should also be noted that there have been positive achievements in the area of disarmament and international security. So-called preventive disarmament might be singled out among such positive trends. Although this tool has been used so far largely by the growing movement to prohibit the illegal transfer of small arms, it could and should be applied in the sphere of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, as well as in working out and implementing new initiatives. History proves that the international community starts the disarmament process only after mankind has excessive, or at least considerable, stockpiles of particular armaments. Practically any type of armament can be used as an example, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

In this connection, the draft resolution to be submitted at this session by the delegation of the Republic of Belarus is aimed at preventing the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction. The goal of the draft resolution is to maintain the procedure built into the existing disarmament mechanism, to monitor the situation and trigger international action if such is required. We hope that this draft resolution will, as in the case of similar draft resolutions in the past, be adopted without a vote and will become another modest element of the growing preventive disarmament trend.

In speaking of today's challenges, I should like to touch on certain key problems in the area of international security and disarmament which are a top priority for our delegation, due to their significance in maintaining security and stability at both global and regional levels. Of vital significance for the process of nuclear disarmament in the past three decades have undoubtedly been the signing and entry into force of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the reduction of strategic offensive weapons within the START I framework and the expected further logical reduction of nuclear weapons under the START II Treaty after the instruments of ratification have been deposited by the Russian Federation and the United States; the unprecedented decision by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine to renounce the possession of nuclear weapons and their voluntary withdrawal from their territories; and treaties setting up nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Latin America, South-East Asia and the Pacific.

The Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) has been, throughout its existence of more than a quarter of a century, a further international agreement to maintain strategic stability, prevent new cycles of the nuclear arms race and provide for their radical reduction. It cannot be disputed that this Treaty, signed and ratified by the two major nuclear Powers, defines the entire system of coordinates for global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The viability of this Treaty as a whole is thus of paramount significance, not only for its parties but also for the entire international community. An obligation not to deploy an ABM system for defence of a party's territory, and not to create a base for such a defence, is a key provision of the ABM Treaty and might be considered in future, not only in the context of its observance by the Treaty parties, but also for wider use, especially under the present conditions of the dangerous proliferation of missiles and missile technology.

In 1997 the Republic of Belarus signed, along with other parties, significant additional agreements which contributed to the strengthening of the efficiency and viability of this extremely important Treaty. We called for strict and full compliance with the ABM Treaty by all the parties in order to preserve its substance without undermining or revising its basic provisions. The actual deployment of national ABM systems would torpedo all the efforts made earlier by the international community in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and would push the matter to an unpredictably dangerous point by undermining START I, START II and the intermediate nuclear forces Treaty, as well as by creating conditions for the escalation of the arms race in new spheres.

In this connection, our delegation, jointly with the delegation of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, has put forward a draft resolution entitled "Preservation of and compliance with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty", whose main purpose is to give a positive impetus to the efforts of the international community to ensure international security, stability and predictability. We count on the broadest possible support for the draft resolution.

Strict compliance with every international agreement in the area of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation is a fundamental basis for ensuring further progress towards achieving the final goal: eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; reducing the threat of global and regional conflicts; and ensuring peace and stability for all, without exception. An important contribution to this process could be made by achieving the universality of the NPT and the CTBT, elaborating efficient verification instruments for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and holding in 2001 an international conference on the illegal transfer of small arms.

We are deeply shocked by the decision of the United States Senate the other day not to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This is a severe blow to the whole edifice and basic structure of modern disarmament and non-proliferation. It is also a blow to trust, which is of paramount importance in negotiating sensitive arms control and disarmament agreements. The whole spectrum of consequences has yet to be analysed. At the same time, we would like to register Belarus's appreciation of the efforts of the United States Executive branch and President Clinton to salvage the situation. We hope they will continue these efforts.

Belarus supports the efforts of the international community directed at elaborating effective international agreements on security assurances for non-nuclear NPT States parties against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We believe that this will only strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime, including through the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. Belarus considers their establishment a positive step, contributing to strengthening common regional security and mutual confidence between the countries of the region — for example, in the Middle East, Central Asia and other regions. That is exactly the purpose of the Belarus initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe. We are convinced that its realization will become a clear priority for the nations of the region in the first half of the twenty-first century.

Our delegation would like to underline the significance of the document, "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned", adopted recently by the Disarmament Commission. It provides an internationally agreed basis for setting up nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Today it is extremely important for the United Nations General Assembly to reaffirm, with full authority, the key role played by the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security and to stimulate intensified efforts to perfect the practice of United Nations peacekeeping activities with an emphasis on conflict prevention. We believe that security can only be reliably guaranteed when any effort to provide for the security of individual countries at the expense and to the detriment of the security of others will for ever have become a thing of the past. We hope that the only way to promote international relations will be the spirit of partnership, cooperation and trust, and not the spectre of political and economic pressure or the build-up of the unilateral supremacy of military alliances. Exclusive security is a contradiction in terms. Inclusive security, indivisible security, is the key to real, not fake, stability.

An important security-building effort has been undertaken at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has entered the final stage of drafting the European security charter. We are convinced that the OSCE possesses wide abilities, successfully tested. The Belarus delegation is actively participating in the elaboration of the charter. We hope this document will be adopted at the OSCE summit in Istanbul this November. We are convinced that its adoption will provide a favourable and solid basis for further promoting partnership and cooperation in Europe in a spirit of trust and mutual understanding between all the nations of the region.

Under present conditions, special significance is attached to the existing regional disarmament and confidence-building agreements, particularly the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the Vienna Document. Belarus is also actively participating in negotiations on the adaptation of the CFE Treaty and the Vienna Document, which are going on in Vienna as we speak here, and hopes that these documents will be ready for signature at the OSCE summit in Istanbul.

In conclusion, let me confirm once again the readiness of my delegation to have fruitful cooperation with you, Mr. Chairman, other members of the Bureau and delegations of all other States in our joint efforts to achieve constructive results in the activities of this Committee.

Mrs. Kunadi (India): The Indian delegation extends to you, Sir, its sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We have every confidence that under your guidance the Committee will accomplish the tasks that it has set for itself.

The closing weeks of this millennium have brought forth in all of us thoughts about humanity's endeavours during what has arguably been an extraordinarily bloody century. This Committee, dealing as it does with international security issues, has much to learn from the lessons of the past to ensure that mistakes are not repeated in the future. The Millennium Summit to be held next year can benefit from our work. Therefore, an added responsibility rests on us this year. This Committee has learned all too often that focus on contentious issues vitiates the atmosphere and saps its productive potential. We hope that the Committee's deliberations will lead us down the path of a collective reappraisal and contribute to the achievement of the disarmament agenda in the years ahead.

The failure of the international community to effectively address the threat posed by nuclear weapons over the past 50 years makes it all the more necessary that we redouble our efforts for their elimination in the coming years. The instrument designed to deal with nuclear weapons and promote global nuclear disarmament and genuine non-proliferation in all its aspects, the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), has proved to be ineffective. Genuine and long-lasting non-proliferation in all its aspects, in the absence of a disarmament yardstick, is difficult not only to achieve, but also to measure. The goal of global nuclear non-proliferation can be achieved if the international community looks beyond the old framework and embraces a new security paradigm that can ensure international peace and security on the basis of equal and legitimate security for all through global disarmament.

The non-discriminatory international Conventions prohibiting chemical and biological weapons respectively were based on a devaluation of the military utility of these weapons and on the belief that, rather than having partial and discriminatory arms control, the interests of international security would be better served through their complete prohibition and elimination. The delegitimization of nuclear weapons and their progressive reduction through a step-by-step process offers the most credible way forward towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. As an original State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), India has endeavoured to discharge, fully and faithfully, its obligations under the Convention. There remains the continuing responsibility of all States parties to the CWC to ensure that all its provisions are implemented fully and effectively. It is a matter of collective concern that some States parties have, despite voicing support for the Convention, not provided full declarations to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), adversely affecting the inspection schedules.

India has participated actively and constructively in the ongoing negotiations in Geneva in the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Ad Hoc Group. We hope that these negotiations, undertaken in accordance with the agreed mandate and without artificial deadlines, will yield results as soon as possible, before the fifth Review Conference in 2001. It is our expectation that the future protocol will not only strengthen the implementation of the BWC, but will also give full expression, in a non-discriminatory manner, to the developmental imperatives contained in article III and article X of the Convention essential for the conclusion of a universally acceptable protocol.

The initial promise of deep, continuous and irreversible reductions in strategic nuclear forces held out by the positive climate of the early post-cold-war years appears to be fading fast. Those countries with the largest nuclear arsenals clearly also have the main responsibility for moving forward the process of nuclear arms reductions. We hope that the agreements reached during the Cologne summit will lead to an early revitalization of the bilateral process. The current stalemate in bilateral nuclear arms negotiations should not be taken as a disincentive for the other long-established nuclear-weapon States, each with substantial arsenals of their own, to undertake reductions in a multilateral framework.

Doctrines of first-use of nuclear weapons have been revalidated, even though the threat perceptions that originally gave rise to those doctrines disappeared long ago. The only remaining military alliance with transcontinental dimensions continues to assign to nuclear weapons the highest priority, with several of its members, ostensibly non-nuclear-weapon States, permitting peace-time deployment of nuclear weapons on their territories and given war-time access to those very weapons, in violation of treaty obligations undertaken by them.

Several distinguished institutions, including several non-governmental organizations, the media and other voices from civil society the world over, have supported the call for a world order based on the principles of equal and legitimate security for all, convinced that it is both essential and possible to bring about the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This was echoed recently at the meeting in New Delhi of Pugwash on the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

In its landmark Advisory Opinion the International Court of Justice concluded unanimously that there exists an obligation not just to begin, but also to bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We need to consider further steps that can build upon that historic Advisory Opinion.

With the end of the cold war a decade ago, there is no justification for the thousands of nuclear weapons that are maintained in a state of hair-trigger alert, creating unacceptable risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons that could have catastrophic consequences for all mankind. The international community is therefore entitled to clear commitments from all the nuclear-weapon States that the most important objective of their policies is to remove the danger of war and reduce the risk of accidental or unintentional use of nuclear weapons, including through what is referred to as the Y2K problem.

Last year India's initiative in introducing a new draft resolution, "Reducing nuclear danger", received widespread support in the General Assembly. A number of programmes and measures for achieving global nuclear disarmament have been put forward by States, eminent individuals, or non-governmental organizations attributing the highest priority to the need to take steps to reduce the risk of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. We propose to reintroduce a similar draft resolution this year, with the expectation that the international community will take the necessary action, both individually and collectively, to reduce the risks posed by hair-trigger-alert postures and related doctrines of use.

There is no dilution of India's commitment to the goal of global nuclear disarmament. India is the only nuclear-weapon State that believes that its security would be enhanced in a nuclear-weapon-free world and thus continues to press for negotiations on a nuclear-weapons convention that will prohibit for ever the development, production, stockpiling, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, and provide for the elimination of all existing weapons under international verification.

Convinced that a world without nuclear weapons would enhance global security as well as its own, India has taken forward several initiatives towards this end. It was the first to call for a ban on nuclear testing, in 1954; for a non-discriminatory treaty on non-proliferation, in 1965; for a treaty on the non-use of nuclear weapons, in 1978; for a nuclear freeze, in 1982; and, in 1988, for a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. None of these were accepted. We were, in turn, asked to join, as supplicants, an unequal and discriminatory non-proliferation regime which is underwritten by a Treaty that has proved to be better at freezing in perpetuity a slice of history as the world stood on 1 January 1967 than at reflecting and contending with the realities of proliferation that that Treaty has been unable to prevent, or the Treaty parties have been unwilling to prevent. The failure of the existing non-proliferation regime has obliged us to take measures to safeguard our security.

The Indian Government has already spelt out in Parliament the main elements of its policy of minimum nuclear deterrence, with the stated purpose of meeting the requirements of its democratic polity: openness and transparency, consistent with national security. The minimum deterrent posture, based on the self-evident principle of "more is not better when less is adequate", governs both the quantum and the operational mode of our nuclear policy, which is characterized by restraint, an essential duty of confidence-building that every nuclear-weapon State owes, but has seldom discharged, to the international community.

The deployment posture, with a civilian command-and-control structure, will be governed by our abiding commitments, voluntarily offered and unconditionally undertaken, to no-first-use of nuclear weapons and to the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. We have already stated our willingness to strengthen this undertaking by entering into bilateral agreements on no-first-use or multilateral negotiations on a global no-first-use of nuclear weapons.

The Committee is aware of the circumstances leading to India's standing aside from the CTBT in 1996. That decision, taken on the basis of national consensus, was governed by certain considerations, some of which have been addressed through the limited series of five underground nuclear tests conducted by India in 1998. Thereafter, India announced a voluntary moratorium on further underground test explosions. The Government of India is committed to creating the widest possible consensus domestically, and naturally a positive environment will be an essential enabling element. We also expect that other countries will adhere to that Treaty without conditions. Recent developments indicate that the CTBT is not a simple, uncomplicated issue. Among other things, it requires building a national consensus in the countries concerned, including India.

India joined the consensus on the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) resolution 53/77 I, adopted by the General Assembly at its last session, a resolution not without the dubious significance of having, literally, a paragraph in lieu of a title. That procedural resolution, adopted without a vote, reaffirmed the substance of resolution 48/75 L, adopted by the General Assembly in 1993.

We are aware that when the Conference on Disarmament is able to successfully negotiate such a treaty it will only be a partial measure towards our shared objective of global nuclear disarmament. India's participation in the negotiations will be constructive and aimed at moving the process forward. The agreement reached in the Conference on Disarmament in 1998 on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on fissile material was made possible by the highest flexibility of a large section of its delegations, including India, whose highest priority remains the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

Despite this flexibility, the Conference on Disarmament was unable this year to register forward movement. This stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, despite no delegation's opposing negotiations on an FMCT, conveys an important lesson — the Conference on Disarmament cannot and should not be used for the pursuit of the exclusivist agendas of a few.

The Conference on Disarmament cannot lose sight of the actual priorities in the disarmament agenda that the international community expects of it. We believe that there should be no slackening of efforts on the vital issue of nuclear disarmament. There are several proposals on the table which deserve serious consideration, including the draft decision put forward by the Group of 21 in document CD/1571 on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. The Conference should utilize to the full mechanisms provided for in its rules of procedure for building the consensus necessary to enable future negotiations. As the single multilateral disarmament forum, the Conference has a crucial, indispensable role.

India has viewed the convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons as the bedrock of negative security assurances which are comprehensive, legally binding, and an irreversible step towards delegitimizing nuclear weapons. India, along with several co-sponsors, which have extended invaluable support, as in previous years, intends to put forward a draft resolution on this subject.

While we have consistently maintained that nuclear-weapon-free zones cannot do justice to the wide variety of concerns emanating from the global nature of the threat posed by nuclear weapons, we respect the sovereign choice exercised by non-nuclear-weapon States in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. We were pleased that the Disarmament Commission was able to reach agreement this year on this subject. Its work will provide useful consensus guidelines we can keep in mind while considering further measures to reduce the global threat posed by nuclear weapons.

At the sixth session of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum in Singapore, India reiterated that it fully respects the status of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia and is ready to convert this commitment into a legal obligation. India will also remain responsive to the expressed need for such commitments to other nuclear-weapon-free zones. India looks forward to further productive interaction with the States of Central Asia, including through the framework of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. India is also prepared to make all necessary commitments for the early realization of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The peaceful applications of nuclear technology are of critical importance for developing countries. As the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) prepares to meet the challenges of coming years, it should remain faithful to its original mandate as a promoter of atomic energy, not just a policeman. Discriminatory restrictions on access to materials, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes, including restrictions which negatively impact on nuclear safety, must give way to open and transparent arrangements. Recent events have shown that we should continue to attach the highest importance to nuclear safety. India is positively considering its accession to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, whose standards of physical protection India has long been practising.

India remains fully committed to maintaining and further strengthening an effective and transparent system of export controls of technologies that would be in line with the objective of non-proliferation in all its aspects, without affecting the peaceful applications of these technologies. At the same time, as a developing country that has had to pay a high developmental cost in view of the persistence of discriminatory control mechanisms, some contrary to existing treaty provisions, India has been fully supportive of multilaterally negotiated, universally acceptable, non-discriminatory guidelines for international transfers of dual-use technologies and high technologies with military applications. We appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General in bringing out the report, "Role of Science and Technology in the context of international security and disarmament", in document A/54/167 and its addenda. With a view to carrying forward the consideration of this subject, India proposes, along with co-sponsors which have extended invaluable support, a draft resolution entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament".

The Conference on Disarmament was unable during its 1999 session to address issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. India was one of the sponsors of resolution 53/76, which reiterated that the Conference on Disarmament has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement, or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

Technological developments, including in ballistic missile defences, could have the effect of opening new areas of competition, adding to pressures against the ABM Treaty. We share the concerns expressed in the final communiqué of the Non-Aligned Movement issued in New York on 23 September regarding the negative implications of these developments and the further erosion of the international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security.

We support the early commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on an appropriate instrument that would, as a first step, ensure the non-weaponization of space, while preserving the use of space — which is the common heritage of mankind — for the full range of peaceful and developmental activities.

India remains committed to the objective of a non-discriminatory and universal ban on anti-personnel mines through a phased process that addresses the legitimate defence requirements of States while ameliorating the critical humanitarian crisis that has resulted from the indiscriminate transfer and use of landmines. We would support negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on banning transfers of anti-personnel landmines on the basis of a mandate that reflects the interests of all delegations.

India has been an active participant in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) process, and this year it ratified amended Protocol II as well as Protocol IV. The first conference of States parties, to be held in December this year in Geneva, will be a useful opportunity to review progress in the CCW process.

The continuing illicit trade in small arms and light weapons which find their way to non-State entities, fuelling strife and terrorism, has been recognized by the international community as one of its priority problems. The transnational linkages, including cross-border terrorism and narco-terrorism, are expanding by the day. We note that there is now a greater awareness of the magnitude and ramifications of this problem, which has a disproportionately large negative impact on the internal stability and socio-economic development of the States affected. The fabric of international society is also threatened by the spectre of international terrorism, fuelled by the availability and transfer of illicit arms.

India supports and will actively participate in the preparatory process for the holding of the proposed international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, in 2001. To prepare for such a conference we believe it would be useful to establish a preparatory committee with a mandate to define the objectives, scope, agenda and final outcome of the Conference.

We were disappointed that the deliberations of the 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) did not meet with success. While India remains committed to the convening of SSOD-IV, we feel that it is essential that we do so by reaffirming the priorities, including that on nuclear disarmament, that were agreed to by consensus in SSOD-I. India cannot be a party to attempts to overturn that consensus. The heads of State or Government at the Durban Non-Aligned Movement summit reaffirmed the need to continue to press for further steps leading to the convening of SSOD-IV, with the participation of all Member States of the United Nations, as well as the need for SSOD-IV to review and assess the implementation of SSOD-I. We believe that other initiatives, especially on the priority issue of nuclear disarmament, would complement as well as contribute to the success of SSOD-IV when it is convened.

As we stand on the threshold of the next millennium, let us resolve to intensify our efforts to strengthen international peace and security. An essential element will have to be a common recognition that the measures we discuss and negotiate are global and non-discriminatory, and will therefore enhance the security of all. The quest for a unilateral security advantage for a few, or the assertion of a right to exclusive standards of national security, goes contrary to the spirit that can sustain a durable system of international security. The Committee should firmly oppose such trends if the international community is to face the multitude of challenges that may arise in the next millennium.

Mr. Pham Binh Minh (Viet Nam): At the outset let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this important Committee. I am confident that under your wise guidance our session will have a successful outcome. I should like to assure you and your Bureau of our delegation's full support.

This session of the First Committee is convened at a very critical juncture of human history. A century of bloody and devastating wars is coming to an end, and humankind stands before a time of great uncertainty with hopes and anxieties. The end of the cold war has brought new opportunities and challenges for the world community to work for a safer and more secure world, as half a century of hostility and rivalry between the great Powers has been replaced by a period of reduced tension and enhanced cooperation. Yet it has become increasingly clear that some of these precious opportunities are being wasted.

In certain quarters of the planet military alliances, which should have little relevance in our world today, have been further strengthened, against the common desire of the overwhelming majority of nations. The development of missile defence systems, on the other hand, introduces nascent risks that may trigger an arms race in outer space and threaten world peace and security. Moreover, nuclear disarmament efforts have been pushed back even further by intransigence in the policies of the nuclear-weapon States in stubbornly sticking to reliance on the deterrence of nuclear weapons. Many delegations have argued during this week's debate very convincingly about the irrelevance of the nuclear-deterrence theory embodied in the security strategies of the nuclear-weapon States. These are indeed not developments to be welcomed, and greater efforts are called for to prevent them.

At the dawn of a new millennium, humanity still lives under the threat of a nuclear holocaust. My delegation fully shares the view of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala that the most consistently difficult issue on the Committee's agenda is the goal of global nuclear disarmament. Despite the fact that a sense of frustration has prevailed in the interventions of many delegations during this week of general debate, my delegation holds that the goal of the total elimination of nuclear stockpiles remains the highest priority of the international community and lies at the heart of the work of the United Nations.

Viet Nam is fully convinced that it is now time for the world community to combine efforts to reach a convention to ban nuclear weapons for good. We are committed to working with other member countries for a world free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We will continue to support every initiative to this end. However, Viet Nam shares the view that pending the conclusion of such a convention the concrete, step-by-step programme called for in the new agenda for nuclear disarmament is a practical and achievable approach.

We also join many other delegations in calling on the nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves immediately to a programme to do away with all their nuclear stockpiles within a time-bound framework. In this connection, we wish to underline that nuclear-weapon States are obligated under legal instruments to conduct genuine negotiations to eliminate each and every nuclear weapon they have produced. It is still incumbent upon these States to fulfil the provisions of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. They have to hold to the commitments under that Treaty to ensure its integrity and full realization.

In this context, the discussion on the measures to make the coming NPT Review Conference a success is of special significance. Viet Nam is sympathetic with the regret expressed by a good number of delegations over the failures of the preparatory process for the NPT Review Conference next year, and wishes to emphasize that urgent action should be taken to pave the way for the review process. The record of our accomplishments in implementing the decisions and resolutions adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference is poor indeed. We hope that the coming Review Conference will give us the needed impetus to make some headway in this endeavour.

It is, however, a pleasure for my delegation to note that the recent Vienna Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has strengthened the determination of the participating countries to work harder for the entry into force of this important instrument. In order to facilitate the Treaty's speedy entry into force, in our view the nuclear-weapon States must lead the way and proceed with their ratification without further delay.

My delegation believes that the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should be convened as early as possible to garner the necessary support for the commitments to comprehensive and complete disarmament. The objective of the session should be to chart a new course in the field of disarmament and build on the achievements of the historic first special session as well as the other landmarks recorded thereafter. It is disappointing that at its recent meetings the Disarmament Commission failed to arrive at a conclusion on this matter. Viet Nam supports the proposal by the Chilean delegation to set up an informal working group to sound out the positions of member countries with a view to arriving at a satisfactory programme and agenda for the special session.

One of the greatest achievements in disarmament in the post-cold-war era is the conclusion and entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which is aimed at destroying all weapons of this type. Viet Nam ratified that Convention last fall and is fully committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. In this connection, we highly appreciate the technical assistance provided by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the international community for the developing countries party to the Convention.

Viet Nam is also party to the Biological Weapons Convention. We will join other member countries to work out a protocol to strengthen the verification regimes needed under the Convention. It is necessary to underline that such regimes should be reasonably inexpensive, which would enhance rather than impede cooperation among States parties to the Convention with respect to the peaceful uses of biotechnology.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a useful nuclear non-proliferation measure. These zones also help to consolidate trust among countries parties to the treaties setting up such zones. They therefore bring benefits to the security and peace of the regions. Viet Nam supports the efforts to create such zones on the basis of agreements mutually arrived at by the parties concerned.

In this connection, I wish to underline that all the countries of South-East Asia have joined the endeavour to turn our region into a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty entered into force more than two years ago. All countries in the region are firmly committed to keeping South-East Asia free from nuclear weapons. A protocol attached to the Treaty is open to the nuclear-weapon States for signature. It is promising that the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation have expressed a desire to sign and ratify that protocol in the near future. Viet Nam once again calls upon all the nuclear-weapon States to sign and ratify the protocol, so that the Treaty will be fully effective, thus making a practical contribution to the consolidation of peace and security in South-East Asia, in particular, and in the world as a whole.

As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Viet Nam shares the concerns of various delegations over the failure of this important multilateral negotiating body on disarmament to reach agreement on its working agenda. We are also very disappointed that, due to the divergence of views of the member countries, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to set up an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We are pleased, however, that after years of negotiation five more countries have been admitted to this body, and we wish to underline that the Conference on Disarmament should be further expanded so as to become a more representative and strengthened body.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm our support for the work of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. It is our belief that the Centre has been very useful in enhancing understanding and mutual trust among countries in the region in terms of both security and the disarmament process. We therefore commend the efforts by the Director of the Centre in carrying out his responsibilities.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First may I on behalf of my delegation congratulate you, Sir, on your well deserved election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure you of the full support of my delegation in your delicate task. I should also like to express our appreciation of the remarkable work done by Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala, at the head of the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

The maintenance of international peace and security is the primary role of the United Nations, and it is most appropriate that disarmament is at the centre of the collective security system. This shows how important the work of the First Committee is. The Committee is rightly regarded as a deliberating forum of universal scope, where nations focus on achieving the objectives of disarmament in order to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Because of the relevance of its recommendations and its prestige, the Committee has clearly made a significant contribution to the work of disarmament.

Over the decade, impressive progress has been made towards general, complete and verifiable disarmament. That progress was made possible thanks to our collective aspirations and our commitment, on the threshold of a new millennium, to work for an era of peace, security and stability, which should mark the end of our divisions.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the indefinite extension of the NPT, the signing by an overwhelming majority of States of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and South-East Asia, and the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention: these have all been important breakthroughs which must make us hope for further successes in disarmament.

Despite much progress, we cannot lose sight of the fact that a great deal remains to be done to achieve the ideal of disarmament. In fact, taking stock of the negotiations on disarmament and nuclear-arms control, we must note a slowing down, if not a standstill, particularly over the past two years. Today we face the very difficult question of knowing what follow-up should be given to the momentum we have created over the past five years.

In that respect, my country, as a member of the Conference on Disarmament, must once more deplore the uncertain situation of this disarmament body. Stuck for the past three years in sterile considerations which bear little relationship to its solid reputation for efficiency or the spirit of consensus which has always animated it, it seems to have become drowsy, yielding to mistrust and suspicion, with the least proposal made by a country or group of countries being immediately suspect.

Thus this single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum has been incapable of continuing negotiations on halting the production of fissile material for military purposes, known as "cut-off", negotiations which were started in 1998. My delegation invites the members of the Conference to make a healthy leap forward by ensuring that the consultations become less passionate and are carried on in a new climate of trust and political will, which is the only guarantee of success for so huge an enterprise as achieving together the total, verifiable, universal elimination of nuclear weapons.

So-called conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, continue to cause great suffering throughout the world, particularly in Africa. Senegal considers that we must pay more sustained attention to the proliferation and illicit trafficking in these weapons, which not only threaten the peace, security and stability of African States, but are major obstacles to the building and consolidation of the democratic process, without which no economic and social development policy will be possible on our continent. Senegal therefore shares the opinion of many countries on the absolute priority that must be given to strategies and policies aimed at combating the proliferation of these small arms and eliminating their sale and trade.

My country, together with the other members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has resolutely focused on seeking a regional solution to combat this scourge. The adoption on 31 October 1998 at Abuja by the Conference of Heads of State or Government of ECOWAS of a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa was a major event in the fight against the accumulation, proliferation and use of these weapons. That Moratorium, which came into force on 1 November 1998, was extended and strengthened in the framework of the integrated security and development project known as the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development, aimed at creating the proper synergies between the urgent requirements of security and stability and the need for harmonious economic and social development. The objective of this Programme is to establish a genuine culture for peace and security in our subregion.

Fortunately, this action of the ECOWAS States is not isolated. It is part and parcel of a broad international campaign to stifle the destabilizing accumulation of light weapons. In Africa the thirty-fifth Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), meeting in Algiers in July, adopted responsible, concrete decisions to tackle this delicate question of the proliferation and illegal movement of small arms and light weapons, which fuel the many conflicts still going on in the continent and the terrorist and criminal networks that seek to affect the stability and security of States.

However, we must emphasize that this need to make Africa safe against this scourge goes far beyond the borders of the continent, which it is hardly necessary to remind the Committee does not produce arms. It also requires the whole international community, in particular the arms-producing countries, to carry out resolute, coordinated international action to resolve all aspects of the proliferation of and illegal trade in these weapons.

We welcome the initiatives to that end taken in Latin America, and particularly by the European Union, which on 17 December adopted a Joint Action of its members concerning this problem. The Action was extended to include Canada within the framework of the common approach of the European Union and Canada, signed on 2 September 1999 at Helsinki, to combat the dissemination and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons. All these initiatives are aimed at adopting joint coordinated action at the international, regional and national levels with a view to contributing to establishing lasting peace in regions threatened or affected by conflicts.

Clearly, all these actions, however relevant, must be harmonized by the United Nations bodies with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The Security Council on 23 September held a general debate on this issue, and noted that the proliferation of these weapons is a factor which harms peace agreements, complicates activities to consolidate peace, and impedes economic and social development policies. That diagnosis shows how important it is to convene an international conference on the illegal trade in small arms in all its aspects in 2001. We must take this opportunity to examine this question seriously, make constructive, and practical proposals, and, in particular, prepare the conference well.

It will be understood that the problem of small arms is a source of major concern to my country, Senegal. The question of anti-personnel mines is also very important. The Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was the result of an excellent initiative to banish from our world these devastating weapons, which are a true scourge of our times. Its entry into force in March was an important step in our disarmament efforts. The success of the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, which was held from 3 to 7 May 1999 at Maputo, is a perfect illustration of the commitment of our community of nations to focus with determination on the fight against these arms.

We must redouble our efforts in the practical implementation of the relevant provisions of this important international legal instrument and support the inter-sessional process of the five Standing Committees of Experts, which include experts of international renown. We must also pay special attention to cooperation between Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to ensure that major objectives, such as demining and assistance to victims, are achieved within a reasonable deadline. The Convention is a genuine opportunity to coordinate resources at the global level to provide effective and adequate assistance to the victims of mines and to the countries affected by this scourge.

Senegal, like all other peace-loving countries, attaches special importance to achieving the common objective of general and complete disarmament, which inevitably depends on eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and limiting the proliferation of conventional weapons. Because of this commitment, my delegation reiterates its appeal for the signature and ratification of treaties. In that respect, the slow pace of ratification of the CTBT is of great concern to us. Senegal, a signatory of all the disarmament treaties and conventions, has always worked and continues to work for the transfer of the immense sums involved in the arms race to operations for sustainable development, because in the final analysis the development of all nations through the dividends of disarmament should concern us as we stand on the threshold of the next millennium. It should also strengthen our collective work, if we really wish to build a world of peace, security, stability and economic and social progress.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): I wish to associate myself with the congratulations already addressed to you, Sir, on your election to the responsible post of Chairman of the First Committee, and to express my confidence that under your able leadership the work of the Committee will be fruitful and effective. I should also like to express our gratitude to the representative of Belgium for his excellent guidance of the Committee's work at its previous session.

The current session of the First Committee is being held at a crucial period, when the approaching new millennium compels us to take stock of what we have achieved and to work out reliable guidelines for international relations in the future.

The priority disarmament task remains the strengthening of the international regime for the non-proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction. Kazakhstan fully supports the efforts being made at the United Nations and in other multilateral forums to ensure the immediate and unconditional accession of all States to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and to enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

Kazakhstan is in favour of steady, step-by-step nuclear disarmament through the fulfilment of their commitments by all States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. On the eve of the 2000 Review Conference, the reduction of nuclear arsenals and the conclusion of a treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials remain tasks of paramount importance that can be solved only through constructive dialogue between, and concerted efforts by, both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. Our delegation stands ready to make its contribution to the success of the 2000 Conference to review the effectiveness of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The renunciation of all forms of nuclear weapons was a natural choice for my country, which experienced to the full the disastrous effects of nuclear testing. Kazakhstan was one of the first countries to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996. Our country makes a practical contribution to efforts to enhance the effectiveness of monitoring compliance. We support the Treaty's entry into force at the earliest possible date, in accordance with its provisions.

The problem of providing security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States continues to be a major concern. In this regard, we believe that there is a need, which is quite natural, to take measures to legalize the so-called negative security assurances provided by nuclear-weapon States on the basis of Security Council resolution 984 (1995).

In our view, the United Nations should play the primary role in solving disarmament problems. The international community's success in achieving a safe, stable and prosperous world depends on the strengthening of cooperation within the framework of the United Nations.

Article VII of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the decisions of the 1995 Conference on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament have provided a solid legal basis for establishing new internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones that will help to strengthen peace and security at the global and regional levels.

Kazakhstan attaches paramount importance to the preservation of peace and security in the Central Asian region, and is keenly interested in progress towards implementing the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Substantial work is being carried out by the group of experts from the five countries of the region, which was established with the assistance of the United Nations. We are convinced that such a zone in Central Asia will constitute an important step towards consolidating the nuclear non-proliferation regime, promoting general and complete disarmament and strengthening regional and international peace and security. Kazakhstan will continue to participate consistently and constructively in the work being carried out to establish this zone.

On 5 August 1999 Kazakhstan became a full member of the Conference on Disarmament. We consider that the admission of Kazakhstan to membership of this prestigious international arms control and disarmament forum is a token of the international community's recognition of Kazakhstan's contribution to global disarmament and the consolidation of the non-proliferation regime, and of its active work to achieve and strengthen universal peace and security. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to all delegations of States members of the Conference on Disarmament for their confidence.

In view of the current world situation, there is a growing need for a thorough examination of the place and role of conventional armed forces and weapons in the consolidation of peace and the maintenance of strategic stability. Kazakhstan believes that the process of radically reducing conventional weapons must be both regional and universal. The implementation of such a process will be equivalent to progress towards general and complete disarmament. In our view, transparency in the control and reduction of conventional weapons provides a good basis for preventing a destabilizing build-up of weapons in any region or an excessive concentration of weapons in any State. In this context, Kazakhstan supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and considers it to be the most important component of such control. Since 1992 Kazakhstan has been providing information on a regular basis to the Register, and it considers that the task at hand is to ensure the broadest possible participation of States Members of the United Nations in the functioning of this important instrument. We also support the proposal on the convening of an international conference on the question of illicit arms trafficking in all its aspects, no later than 2001.

We fully support the humanitarian orientation of the Ottawa Convention, whose goal is the complete elimination of those treacherous instruments of war, anti-personnel landmines. Kazakhstan is continuing to make its contribution to international efforts in this area, and strictly abides by the moratorium declared by the Government of Kazakhstan in August 1997 on the export of anti-personnel mines, including their re-export and transit. At the same time, in our view the movement for the complete prohibition of anti-personnel mines should be an ongoing, step-by-step process, based on the mine protocol of the Convention on inhumane weapons. The Conference on Disarmament must intensify its efforts to solve this problem.

Kazakhstan has consistently expressed its support for the creation of security structures in the Asian continent and is continuing its efforts to realize the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazerbaev, on the convening of a Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), first proposed from the rostrum of the General Assembly in 1992. The outcome of the multilateral talks and discussions within CICA was the holding on 14 September 1999 of a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of States members of the Conference and the signing of the Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations between CICA Member States. Thus for the first time in history the legal foundations of the Asian security system have been laid. We are grateful to all States participating in the CICA process for their support for our initiative and their genuine willingness to work together to build up an Asian security system. I should like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuing interest in and support for Kazakhstan's initiative.

From the standpoint of ensuring security in our region we attach great importance to the holding, in August 1999, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, of a meeting of the Heads of State members of the Shanghai Five. The unique cooperation that was begun three years ago in Shanghai by five countries — Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan — on regional and global security, and the prevention and overcoming of crises on the Eurasian land mass, has demonstrated its vitality. The agreements concluded and ratified by the five States on questions of border regulation, confidence in military matters, and mutual reduction of armed forces in border regions, help to strengthen good-neighbourliness and friendship, and make a constructive contribution to ensuring security and stability in the Asian region.

In conclusion, I should like to express my great appreciation of the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. In our view, the Regional Centre is a useful instrument that can help to create an atmosphere of cooperation and disarmament in the region. The Centre is continuing to assist the five Central Asian States in drafting a treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We hope that the Centre will continue its work and that it will receive the necessary assistance.

During its current session the First Committee will be adopting important decisions with a view to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and ensuring peace and security at the regional and global levels. The delegation of Kazakhstan is ready to strengthen its cooperation with other delegations in the First Committee in order to achieve our common goals.

Mr. Kuindwa (Kenya): I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to your important post. We are confident that under your leadership the First Committee will successfully complete its work. I assure you of my delegation's full support. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

This has been a particularly difficult year for disarmament. It has seen numerous developments which have not augured well for international security. Chief among these has been the continued recourse to arms as a means of conflict resolution. International peace and security has been shaken by such developments.

In our part of the world the ready availability of illicit small arms and light weapons continues to cause untold suffering and hardship. The situation in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are cases in point. The report (A/54/258) of the Secretary-General on small arms, which was prepared as a result of resolution 52/38 J, confirmed the devastating use to which such arms have been put. These types of weapons have been used in armed conflicts, especially where the conflicts involved irregular troops. In that connection, we would like to recall resolution 53/77 B, which asked the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to curb the illicit flow of small arms in Africa, through the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations.

In view of the extensive security threat posed by light weapons, Kenya looks forward to the conference on the illicit arms trade to be held by the year 2001, as envisaged in resolution 53/77 E. To that end, Kenya is currently exploring the possibility of organizing a conference on the issue of illicit small arms circulating in our subregion.

In Geneva the Conference on Disarmament has made no substantive progress in its work this year and has come to a complete standstill. This unfortunate situation resulted from disagreements on how to address two critical issues: nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It is a well-known fact that nuclear weapons pose the greatest single danger to the entire spectrum of life on our planet. This notwithstanding, the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons are yet to take off. Indeed, existing stocks of nuclear weapons held by the nuclear-weapon States are enormous. It has been estimated by reputable disarmament research institutes that each of the two largest nuclear Powers has approximately 6,000 nuclear warheads, including various types of missiles launched from the air, land or sea, most of which are on an alert status. Their range is such that they can be deployed to strike at targets virtually anywhere on earth.

It has been pointed out repeatedly at different forums that nuclear weapons can only provide a false sense of security. While their massive potential for destruction reduces their real utility value, it is hard to imagine that they can be held in perpetuity and never used. One can only imagine the high cost of maintaining these weapons in their current status and ponder to what better uses such resources could be put. Realistically, the continued possession of such weapons by some States will drive others to also endeavour to acquire them. This is indeed a frightening scenario.

The balance sheet for nuclear disarmament is rather negative at a time when we are preparing for a major review of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to be carried out next year. Article VI of that Treaty commits all States parties to, *inter alia*, pursue in good faith negotiations towards nuclear disarmament at an early date. The role of the five nuclear-weapon States is particularly vital.

At the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the five States, within the framework of the document entitled "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament", reaffirmed their commitment to undertake nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT. They have repeatedly made this reaffirmation, including as recently as last month.

We are, however, disappointed that these reaffirmations seem to have become an end in themselves, as they have not been followed by any concrete steps. It is now almost 30 years since the NPT came into force, and it is almost five years since the five nuclear-weapon States renewed their commitment at the last NPT review conference to undertake nuclear disarmament in good faith. Yet during all that period movement towards such disarmament has been dismally slow.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Talks have stalled as a result of failure by one of the parties to ratify the START II Treaty. At its fiftieth summit in Washington in April this year the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) reaffirmed its doctrine of nuclear sharing with its non-nuclear-Power partners. This act, of course, contravenes articles II and III of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This development was followed by the release by one country of a draft nuclear doctrine aimed at the development of land-, sea- and air-launched nuclear weapons.

As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Kenya considers that the two critical issues — nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space — should be seriously tackled by the Conference as a matter of priority. We hope that those member States of the Conference which have been opposed to the substantive discussion of the two issues will soon review their stand. That would help to get the Conference back on track and restore its credibility.

As for nuclear non-proliferation, the significance of two major treaties is at risk. Prospects for the 2000 NPT Review Conference were somewhat dimmed by the outcome of its third Preparatory Committee session in May this year. The Committee only managed to reach agreement on procedural issues, thus putting aside all substantive issues for the Review Conference itself.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is yet to enter into force. That is because only 26 out of the 44 States whose ratification is mandatory for this purpose have so far ratified it. It is particularly disappointing that three of these States parties are nuclear-weapon States. Although we appreciate the efforts of the United States Administration in seeking ratification of the CTBT, it is disquieting that the United States Senate has rejected its ratification and put in serious jeopardy the very survival of the Treaty.

In a nutshell, nuclear disarmament is today in a state of disarray. All but one of the nuclear-weapon States seem to lack the political will to seriously undertake nuclear disarmament, be it at the Conference on Disarmament or under any other aegis.

The disarmament agenda has become rather skewed, because of the near total absence of tangible measures and effective action on nuclear disarmament by nuclear-weapon States. While the international community has successfully negotiated and adopted instruments prohibiting chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, it is disturbing that the nuclear-weapons area remains untouchable. In order to restore some balance in the disarmament agenda it is time for us to prepare the ground for an eventual instrument outlawing the use of nuclear weapons and banning their production, with a view to their eventual elimination.

On outer space, we consider that the prevention of an arms race is vital, as was reaffirmed in resolution 53/76 and similar earlier resolutions. The rapid pace of technological development in both space and military science in recent times has increased the prospect of the introduction of weapons into outer space. Each and every State represented here today has a border, so to speak, with outer space and therefore a legitimate interest in its well-being. That makes space a veritable common heritage for us all. It should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes; potentially destructive purposes, such as an arms race, are unacceptable.

We would like in this connection to commend the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs for successfully organizing the Third United Nations Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space last July in Vienna. We urge the Secretary-General to favourably consider the recommendations of the Conference, in particular the one on assistance to developing countries, which is intended to enable them to develop their space capability.

In order to keep outer space clear of an arms race it is imperative to seal possible loopholes in the existing legal regime governing its use. Treaties such as the 1963 Partial Test-Ban Treaty and the 1967 outer space Treaty should be updated to *inter alia* take into account the rapidly evolving space technology, which has made outer space more readily accessible for potentially non-peaceful uses.

We have taken note of the report of the Secretary-General concerning the Steering Group on Disarmament and Development. Among other things, it points out the devastating impact of civil conflicts on development all over the world. The destruction occasioned by these wars has led to an unfortunate situation whereby resources for development are increasingly being diverted to emergency and rehabilitation operations.

As is well known, Africa, a continent which is still grappling with the problems of poverty-eradication and development, has been seriously affected by wars which have led to the extensive destruction of infrastructure and massive destabilization of populations. Huge amounts of resources are being spent on reconstruction rather than on development. There is, therefore, an urgent need for serious disarmament efforts in the continent, which brings into focus the role of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. We are certain that the Regional Centre has the potential to play an important role in the promotion of peace and disarmament in Africa. We hope, therefore, that the Secretary-General will continue his efforts to revive it and endow it with adequate resources. We similarly hope that more donors will recognize the important role of the Centre and generously provide it with the assistance it so urgently needs.

On the subject of anti-personnel landmines, it is gratifying to note that the Ottawa Convention took effect on 1 March this year, followed later by the First Meeting of the States Parties in Maputo. We commend Mozambique for successfully hosting that meeting. The Convention is historic in the sense that it deals with all aspects of the landmine issue. The Ottawa Convention remains the only mechanism under which all issues pertaining to landmines should be addressed. We cannot afford the luxury of creating parallel mechanisms. The international community should instead intensify its efforts to universalize the treaty. We particularly urge those States which are major producers and users of anti-personnel landmines to adhere to the Convention at an early date. Kenya is a signatory to the Convention and is currently in the process of ratifying it.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that my delegation has raised only a few of the pressing issues on the Committee's agenda. We look forward to participating in the deliberations of the Committee on these and other issues.

Mr. Beyendeza (Uganda): On behalf of the Ugandan delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over the Committee during this session of the General Assembly, and all other members of the Bureau. Be assured of our full support and cooperation.

Disarmament is crucial for the maintenance of international peace and security, which is the principal reason for the existence of the United Nations. Yet the nuclear arms race, with its attendant dangers, continues unabated on the eve of the new century, with a number of States still relying on more nuclear weapons for their national defence. At the same time, the nuclear-weapon States have themselves turned a deaf ear to the objectives and ideals of nuclear disarmament. In fact, they have become indifferent to any serious multilateral arrangements in current disarmament programmes. Our delegation believes this should not be the case, especially at this time.

It is also regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament has once again failed to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Our delegation requests member States of the Conference on Disarmament to start negotiations as soon as possible.

My delegation would like to add its voice to the call upon all Member States of the United Nations, especially those which have not yet signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to sign it without any further excuses. We also ask that the two major nuclear Powers, the Russian Federation and the United States, ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which they have signed. This we believe will be a sure way forward towards the desired goal of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Twenty-seven years ago the international community took a bold step in adopting a treaty banning the production and use of biological weapons. It is hoped that the ongoing negotiations on a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention will be concluded soon and that this category of weapons of mass destruction will also be more closely monitored.

Of particular concern to developing countries, and especially to my delegation, is the question of small arms and light weapons and the use of landmines. Small arms, light weapons and landmines have become major instruments in all armed conflicts all over the world. In Africa most armed conflicts are fought exclusively with small arms and light weapons. The degree of destruction and the loss of life and property as a result of these small arms is overwhelming. Of course, the Committee is familiar with the staggering statistics involving death, disability and destruction, all resulting from armed conflicts. We believe that the root causes of these conflicts should be addressed. Many conflicts result from the lack of social and economic development.

The long-term impact of the use of small arms, light weapons and landmines by child soldiers is yet to be fully assessed. What is clear and undisputed, however, is that a culture of violence has emerged and is intensifying. Educational systems have been disrupted, and a generation suffering from different traumas is emerging. In addition, enormous resources, amounting to billions of dollars, are wasted annually on the acquisition of small arms, light weapons and landmines. These resources could be better utilized for social and economic development. It is therefore imperative, if sustainable peace and development is to be attained in Africa, that the control of small arms proliferation and a reduction in expenditures on arms be high on the security and development agenda.

My delegation therefore appeals to those 70 countries which manufacture and trade in small arms and light weapons to review their trading practices to ensure that these dangerous weapons are not sold to non-State actors. In this regard, Uganda welcomes the Secretary-General's report (A/54/258) on small arms and other initiatives at the regional and multilateral levels which aim at the control of small arms and light weapons. We appreciate in particular the practical measures taken to collect and destroy these weapons, such as those that have been undertaken by Mali, Albania and Liberia.

My delegation looks forward to the convening of an international conference to fully address the issue of the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, in the year 2001. We would, however, in the meantime hope that the international community will continue to provide the necessary assistance to all African countries to effectively address the problems that have been caused by the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms, light weapons and landmines in our continent and beyond.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea): Allow me to begin by extending my delegation's warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that your able leadership and vast experience will steer the Committee's work to a successful conclusion. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation with you and the Bureau in dealing with the important issues before the Committee.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for his introductory statement last Monday outlining the tasks before us and suggesting the direction we need to take.

In the aftermath of the cold war the international community has endeavoured to accelerate the process of multilateral negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation, particularly in the field of weapons of mass destruction, with some progress. Over the past year, however, the process of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation has experienced unfortunate setbacks. We have witnessed a series of negative developments: the stalling of the START process; further nuclear testing; irresponsible missile firings; the failure to adopt a programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament; and a delay in the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Those developments underscore the importance of the current session of the First Committee in addressing squarely the wide range of pending issues with the objective of revitalizing and facilitating the multilateral process of global disarmament and non-proliferation at this crucial juncture.

As we stand in the twilight of the twentieth century we feel utterly frustrated to see that our generation, which invented and experimented with devastating nuclear weapons, has not been able to take any effective measures to get them under control before the century comes to a close. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was, and remains, the first and only such attempt by the international community to establish a global non-proliferation regime. However, last year's nuclear testings in South Asia dealt a serious blow to such efforts to create a nuclear-weapon-free world and undermined the credibility and integrity of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, continuing non-compliance with the NPT by some of the States parties to the Treaty has also damaged the non-proliferation regime. At the same time, growing concern has been voiced at the limited progress in the reduction of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States.

At this critical juncture the international community should pursue more vigorously, and as a highest priority, universal adherence to the NPT and full compliance with its provisions. We should also redouble our collective efforts so that the nuclear arms race in South Asia may be reversed and Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) may be fully implemented. We also wish to underline the importance of the universal application of the Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency's Safeguards Agreement.

It is unfortunate that the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the parties to the NPT, held last May, was not able to reach agreement on substantive recommendations. It is therefore imperative that the 2000 NPT Review Conference, being the first review conference since the indefinite extension of the NPT, prove to be a critical opportunity to renew our collective commitment to the NPT and to the strengthening of its regime. As a follow-up to the 1995 decision on strengthening the review process for the Treaty, the Review Conference should also serve to evaluate past achievements and identify areas where future progress could be made.

Nuclear disarmament is another priority. While appreciating the progress made so far in the reduction of nuclear weapons, we believe that nuclear-weapon States should demonstrate a greater willingness to turn words into action. We urge the revitalization of the START process through the earliest possible entry into force of START II and through an early commencement of START III negotiations. In this connection, we welcome the statement on 23 September 1999 by the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council in which they reaffirmed their commitment to nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament. We are also encouraged to note their stated willingness to contribute to the successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference. We share the view that it is time to explore ways and means to enhance a multilateral exchange of information and views on progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament in the context of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is now universally recognized that the CTBT will significantly contribute to preventing the nuclear arms race. We welcome the Final Declaration adopted last week at the Vienna Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and call upon all States which have not yet signed and/or ratified the Treaty, especially those whose ratification is necessary for its entry into force, to do so at the earliest date possible. In particular, three States listed, which have not yet signed the Treaty, should respond immediately to the overwhelming call of the international community. My delegation takes this opportunity to inform the Committee that the Republic of Korea deposited its instrument of ratification of the Treaty on 24 September 1999. We join others in expressing profound disappointment at the inability of the United States Senate to ratify the Treaty. We sincerely hope that the United States, which has so far led international efforts to strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, will be able to continue to play such a leadership role by resolving the issue of CTBT ratification as soon as possible.

It is discouraging to note that negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) have not moved forward this year, despite the agreement to establish an ad hoc committee in 1998. We support the immediate commencement of those negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament as the next logical and practical step in our global nuclear non-proliferation effort. Moreover, we hope that, pending the completion of FMCT negotiations, all the States concerned will be able to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material for military purposes.

In regard to nuclear-weapon-free zones, we welcome the adoption at this year's session of the Disarmament Commission of the principles on the establishment of such zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. We hope that the letter and spirit of these principles will be respected and observed by all member States concerned.

My delegation appreciates the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which since its establishment has conducted inspections of chemical-weapons-related facilities around the world and destroyed thousands of tonnes of chemical agents in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. We call upon all those States which remain outside the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), especially major possessors of chemical weapons, to accede to the Convention at the earliest date possible.

The recent rapid developments in biotechnology make the prospect of biological weapons even more frightening. The important task of creating a verification regime for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) should be tackled in a more serious and constructive manner by the international community so as to enable the Ad Hoc Group to conclude its negotiation for the protocol to the Convention in a spirit of compromise well before the fifth BWC Review Conference.

Strengthening existing disarmament agreements is no less important than producing new agreements. Indeed, non-acceptance of the existing norms by any country will set a bad precedent with regard to putting those norms in place and future disarmament initiatives. Attaining universality is indeed a cross-cutting issue pertaining to all internationally legally binding instruments, including the NPT, the CTBT, the CWC and the BWC. We are all aware that the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction have a universal impact, not limited to one country or one region. Moreover, the development of those weapons programmes will lead to the diversion of enormous financial resources away from the socio-economic development needs of those countries which require international assistance. The international community should therefore continue to make efforts to develop appropriate responses to ensure universal adherence to all agreements related to eliminating weapons of mass destruction in a more vigorous and comprehensive manner.

Another important issue is control over the export of sensitive material, technology and equipment which can be used for the development of weapons of mass destruction. All exporting countries are called upon to exercise strong and effective control over the export of such sensitive material, technology and equipment to those high-risk proliferation countries which have not acceded to, and/or complied with, the relevant international treaties and agreements.

The proliferation of missiles as a means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction seriously undermines international peace and stability. The missile test launchings conducted in South Asia, the Middle East and North-East Asia caused consternation and triggered an increased awareness of, and concern over, the dangers of missile proliferation. In view of the fact that there are currently no international norms regulating the proliferation of long-range missiles, we concur with the Secretary-General's view on the need for multilaterally negotiated norms against the spread of ballistic missile technology for military purposes and for restraint in missile development. In addressing this issue, we believe that a step-by-step approach would be most practical, given the inherent complexities. We could begin perhaps by creating an expert group to study all aspects of the missile issue and ask the group to submit a report to the Committee.

We have seen, particularly in the post-cold-war era, that conventional weapons have a more destabilizing consequence in many situations from pre-conflict to post-conflict settings. In particular, the international community's concerns have heightened regarding the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which claim innocent lives, fuel further conflicts and impede post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation.

A series of actions by the Security Council this year, including the recent ministerial meeting devoted to small arms, highlighted the urgent need to tackle the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. We welcome the adoption of the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament at this year's session of the Disarmament Commission. We believe that the excessive accumulation of, and illicit trafficking in, small arms and light weapons could best be averted by a combination of reduction and preventive measures. We appreciate the regional initiatives to control small arms, especially in West Africa, Europe and South America, and hope that these efforts will be further strengthened. We also welcome weapons collection efforts organized by the United Nations. We support the convening of an international conference on the illicit trade in small arms in the year 2001, and believe that the recommendations in the report (A/54/258) of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms will be very helpful in preparing that conference.

On the issue of anti-personnel landmines, the past year has seen significant developments: the entry into force of amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention. My Government plans to accede to the CCW and its amended Protocol II in the very near future. We also support the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the treaty banning the transfer of anti-personnel landmines. My Government has joined international efforts to minimize the inhumane consequences of anti-personnel landmines by taking a series of steps, such as extending indefinitely its export moratorium on anti-personnel landmines and continuing our financial contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action.

I turn now to the issue of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). The Republic of Korea is already on record as voicing its support for the convening of the special session. Indeed, since SSOD-III, held in 1988, there have been not only significant developments in the field of international non-proliferation and disarmament, but also notable changes in the international security environment. That is why we believe that it is time for us to review the most critical aspects of disarmament and chart our future course of action. It is our view that SSOD-IV should address past, present and future disarmament issues in a comprehensive and balanced manner. We hope that we can reach a consensus this time on the convening of SSOD-IV.

The international community has exerted strenuous efforts to bring North Korea into full compliance with the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. Unfortunately, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has so far failed to cooperate fully with the IAEA in implementing the Agreement. It is imperative that, as a State party to the NPT, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea implement the IAEA Safeguards Agreement fully and faithfully. The adoption without a vote at the General Conference of the IAEA two weeks ago of the resolution on the implementation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of the Safeguards Agreement bears witness to the repeated calls of the international community for full compliance by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with its Treaty obligations and for its cooperation with the IAEA.

The Geneva Agreed Framework has proved to be an important step forward in addressing North Korea's nuclear problem. Hence, my Government has faithfully fulfilled its commitment to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) by playing a central role in the organization's project of constructing light-water reactors in North Korea. We will continue to do so as long as North Korea lives up to the letter and spirit of the Agreed Framework. We also look forward to the early implementation of the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, signed by the two Koreas in 1991.

The Republic of Korea, a staunch supporter of the global non-proliferation regime, has acceded to and faithfully complied with all major instruments related to weapons of mass destruction, such as the NPT, the CWC, the BWC and the CTBT. My Government holds to its firm commitment to the global non-proliferation regime, and hopes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will follow suit by joining the non-proliferation efforts of the international community and thus contribute to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

As you, Mr. Chairman, so well articulated in your opening statement last Monday, it is the responsibility of our generation to carry forward the work to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". To this end, we need to redouble our efforts to create an international environment conducive to peace and stability in all corners of the world.

At the dawning of the new millennium, we must renew our collective commitment to forge a consensus in dealing with the arduous tasks of further enhancing disarmament and non-proliferation and instilling a culture of peace. I am confident that the Committee will do its best during the current session to meet these challenges for the benefit of peace and security for all mankind.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate this morning.

I now call on the representative of the Russian Federation to make a statement which I understand is not related to the general debate.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is disappointed by, and seriously concerned about, the refusal by the United States Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This important international instrument is the result of many years of effort by many countries and is of prime importance to international security and stability, because it strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

At all stages of the Treaty's elaboration the Administration of the United States of America took a most active part, and it was the first to sign. This decision by the Senate of the United States of America is a serious blow to the entire system of agreements in the area of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly with regard to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We have drawn your attention, Mr. Chairman, to the statement by President Clinton to the effect that his Administration will observe the moratorium on the conducting of nuclear tests, which all five nuclear Powers are adhering to at this time. At the same time, in the situation which has emerged, Russia, while committed to the CTBT, feels bound to take most seriously into account the result of the Senate's decision regarding this Treaty for our own security and for stability throughout the world.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): As Chairman, I too wish to make a brief statement, which I do with respect to all delegations and as neutrally as possible.

I had been advised by the secretariat that the statement by the Russian Federation would be of a procedural character relating to the Committee's work. From now on such statements will be accepted only within what the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly have established: the right of reply or other matters that have to do with the subject being dealt with, or in the context of the general debate. That is the only way in which we can maintain order in the general debate. We still have to hear many speakers who have statements to make that are important for the work of the Committee, and we shall hear everyone.

I am not giving an opinion as to the substance of the statement made by the Russian Federation, which it is its sovereign right to make; I am simply trying to ensure the minimum order, because otherwise there will be a series of statements which have nothing to do with the structure of the Committee's work.

I repeat that statements made in exercise of the right of reply or in accordance with other provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, or statements made in the context of the general debate, are permissible. As I have said, I was told that the statement would concern organizational problems.

In parenthesis, may I say that any suggestion relating to organizational matters will be very welcome to the Chair, because sometimes, as we say in my country, one cannot see the wood for the trees.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.